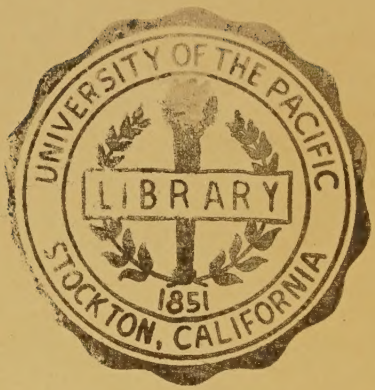
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BERKELEY SQUARE

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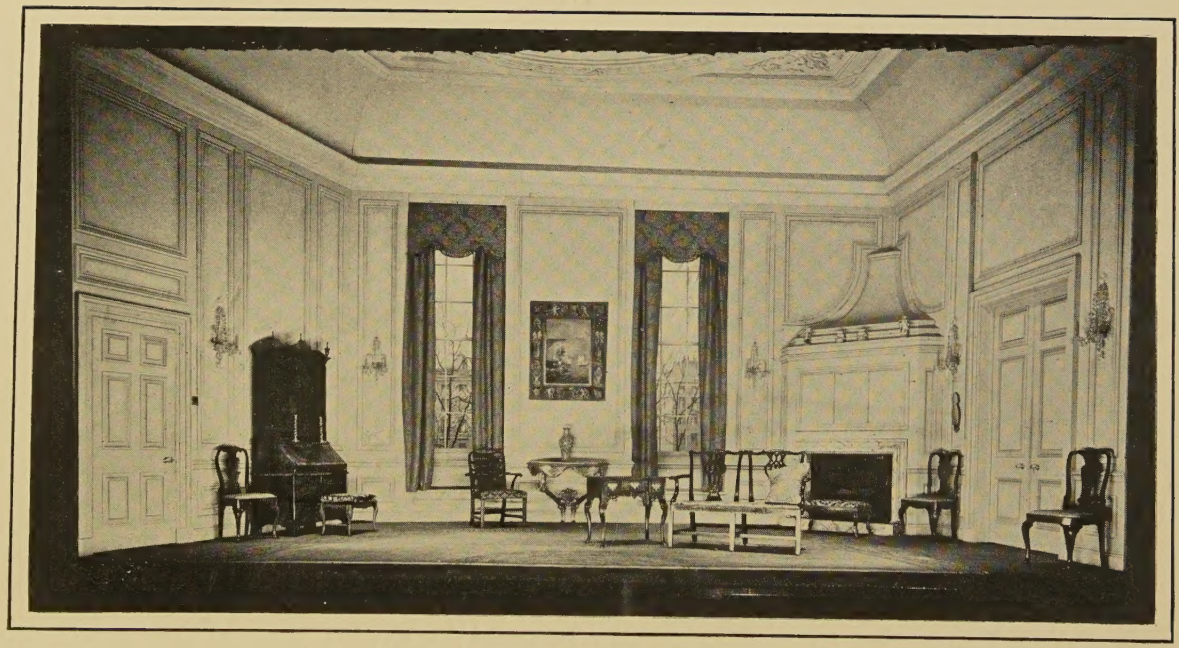

THE ORIGINAL SET DESIGNED BY SIR EDWARD LUTYENS, R.A.

BERKELEY SQUARE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY
JOHN L. BALDERSTON

(The plot suggested by Henry James's posthumous fragment, "The Sense of the Past." The author also acknowledges the invaluable assistance of J. C. Squire.

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1929

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En soi, il est à peu près certain qu'il n'est qu'un immense Présent, éternel, immobile, où tout ce qui a eu et tout ce qui aura lieu a immuablement lieu, sans que demain, excepté dans l'esprit éphémère des hommes, se distingue d'hier ou d'aujourd'hui.

MAETERLINCK.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance)

MAID
TOM PETTIGREW
MISS PETTIGREW
THE LADY ANNE PETTIGREW
MR. THROSTLE
HELEN PETTIGREW
THE AMBASSADOR
MRS. BARWICK
PETER STANDISH
MARJORIE FRANT
MAJOR CLINTON
MISS BARRYMORE
THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE
LORD STANLEY
H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CUMBERLAND, K.G.

(The action throughout takes place in the morning-room of a house of the Queen Anne period in Berkeley Square, London, in the years 1784 and 1928.)

ACT I

SCENE 1. Five o'clock, October 23rd, 1784.
SCENE 2. Five o'clock, October 23rd, 1928.
SCENE 3. Continuous with Scene 1.

ACT II

Night, a few 1784 days later.

ACT III

SCENE 1. Afternoon in 1784, a week later.
SCENE 2. Continuous with Scene 1, but in 1928.

BERKELEY SQUARE

BERKELEY SQUARE

ACT ONE

Scene One

[*October the 23rd, 1784. The morning-room of a Queen Anne house in Berkeley Square. It is panelled and painted a creamy white. There are two long recessed windows at the back, with pelmets and curtains of rose-coloured Italian brocade that fall to the window seats. They look out into the trees of the enclosed garden, now drenched with rain. The backdrop shows houses across the Square. In the right wall, well front stage, a door opens inwards. Tall Queen Anne walnut writing-bureau, closed, with a pair of brass candlesticks on the candle-slides, stands against the right wall back stage, with a needlework-covered walnut stool in front of it. Between the door and the writing-bureau, a walnut chair. In the centre panel of the rear wall hangs a tapestry; under this, a delicately modelled gilt console table, with a Chelsea group upon it. An armchair a little to the front and right of the table. The large fireplace, set at an angle across the corner between the L. window and a double door in the left wall, has bolection moulding around the fire, and a painted landscape let into the panel above.*

Small table, folded, against the back wall between L. window and fire; and on each side of the double door, a walnut cabroile-leg chair. Mirror and bell pull on the wall between fireplace and door; low walnut stool before fireplace. A small settee is placed left centre; to the right of this a walnut cabriole-leg table, with drawers, used as a work table. Occupying the centre of the stage, a section of an oval rug, yellow, with a Chinese design in blue and rose. Parquetry stagecloth on part of floor not covered by rug. The room is lit by five glass sconces of two lights each, one between writing-bureau and door, one to the R. *of the* R. *window, one to the* L. *of* L. *window, one on each side of the double door.*]

(As the curtain rises, five full deep notes are heard from a grandfather clock—off stage, on the landing outside the door R. *It is dusk. The fire is burning. Candles on left of stage are lit as the curtain rises.* MAID, *wearing a blue-grey dress with frilled mob-cap, is discovered with taper lighting candles* R. *She blows out the taper, and as she is drawing the curtains, the sound of a horse's hoofs is heard. The horse stops outside. She hurries out* R. *She reenters* R., *carrying a letter in her hand.* TOM PETTIGREW *follows. He is a youth in his twenties, clothed as a town buck of the period. He has aristocratic features; mouth normally twisted into a sneer; naturally coarse, brutal, disagreeable under*

the veneer of good breeding. He is, very slightly, tipsy.)

TOM. What have you there?

MAID. For her ladyship, sir.

TOM. Give it me.

MAID. But 'tis for her ladyship.

TOM *(Scowling)*. Give it me!

[MAID *reluctantly lets him take the letter. He stoops to kiss her.*]

MAID. No, please, Mr. Tom!

TOM. Gad's life, Wilkins, when did you turn prude?

MAID. I told you I'm to be married, sir.

TOM. Ay, but to whom, my love? Some lusty great footman, what? *(A thought strikes him.)* And if we found him . . . *(Leers at her.)* we could tell him something.

MAID *(Terrified)*. Oh, Mr. Tom, you'd never. . . .

TOM *(Seizing her)*. We're more reasonable now, ain't we?

[*Enter* KATE PETTIGREW, L., *carrying needlework. She is twenty-five, dressed fashionably, cool, competent, handsome, self-assured. She stops at door.* TOM *releases* MAID.]

Damme, you shouldn't slink about.

[KATE *makes a gesture of dismissal to* MAID, *who goes out* R.]

KATE *(Contemptuously)*. Are not maids difficult enough to find, at the beggarly wage we can afford, without your making the keeping of them impossible?

TOM *(Trying to recover his poise)*. 'Tis me you should thank, Kitty, that they seek our employment at all.

KATE. Foh! Your tastes are those of a stable-boy!

TOM. Your tongue is worse than Helen's great staring eyes when she looks through a man. An agreeable pair of sisters! I'll not endure it. While my father's at sea, am I not his deputy here?

KATE. A pretty deputy! I hope you'll repeat that remark to our mother.

TOM. And why not, pray? Where is her ladyship?

[KATE *puts her work in drawer of small table* L. *front.*]

KATE. You had best avoid her. Your latest follies have set her beside herself.

TOM *(Importantly)*. She will forget such trifles, when she hears my news.

KATE *(Mockingly)*. Are they so important? Has Miss Sinclair taken pity upon you at last?

TOM. 'Tis a lie; I never asked her.

KATE. 'Tis said she is the sixth to refuse you.

TOM. Damn them all, no woman nowadays will look at a man without money—until after she's married a man who's got it!

KATE. If you realize you've no money, why must you gamble as though you'd a fortune?

TOM *(Mysteriously)*. Ah, Fortune! Perhaps Fortune is but now knocking at our door. I come as Fortune's herald.

KATE. I *thought* you were tipsy.

TOM. If Helen were here, she'd interpret my oracle, and not carp like a Covent Garden orange wench.

KATE *(Curious but haughty)*. Why so classical today? First a herald, now an oracle?

TOM. Helen could see through the wall with those damned eyes of hers—and what d'you think she'd see? Fortune, approaching this house, now, in the flesh. Fortune wearing breeches, no doubt very badly cut. *(Teasingly.)* Now. Three guesses, Kate.

KATE *(Intensely excited)*. Is he—has Cousin Peter arrived from America?

TOM. Faith, you have guessed it in one!

KATE *(Holding herself in)*. If you are the first Pettigrew he's met, we *are* unfortunate!

TOM. He has not had that honour.

KATE *(Impatiently)*. Then how do you know he's in London?

TOM. Met Bill Clinton in St. James's Street not an hour since. He came with him from New York in the *General Wolfe*.

[KATE *starts to go out* L.]

So you've no interest in my further news? *(Waves letter tantalizingly.)*

KATE *(Turning)*. From him?

TOM *(Scrutinizing it)*. I judge so!

KATE. Give it me!

TOM *(Affecting to be shocked)*. When 'tis directed, as is proper, to her ladyship?

KATE *(Turns, pulls bell-cord)*. And you have kept it all this time!

TOM. I thought to find your Yankee already here. He can't be so eager as his letters have made you suppose,

KATE. He sends an intimation before him, as any gentleman would.

TOM *(Sneering)*. Gentleman! From New York! Now look'ee, Kitty. Hook this Colonial and there need be no more talk of beggary in this family.

[*The* MAID *enters* R.]

KATE. Find out her ladyship and give her this letter.

[TOM *gives* MAID *letter, exit* MAID L.]

I know what you've in mind. He is not to know of your debts.

TOM. D'you think all the benefits from this arrangement are to be yours?

KATE. I know of no arrangement.

TOM. I suppose there's been no suggestion of a settlement of fifteen thousand pounds?

KATE. I've not said I'll have him.

TOM *(Dryly)*. You will.

[*Enter* LADY ANNE L. *carrying letter open. She wears the high wig in fashion a few years earlier. She is fifty, stout, high-nosed, determined, rather a dragon.*]

LADY ANNE. Kate! Thomas! He's arrived. Cousin Peter is in London! *(Waves letter, comes to settee.)*

KATE. Read it, ma'am!

[KATE *sits by Mother;* TOM *leans over back of settee.*]

LADY ANNE *(Fumbles with lorgnette)*. Let me see. Ah, "October 23rd, 1784. Honoured madam: Having arrived within the hour. . . . "

TOM. Where'd he send this from?

LADY ANNE *(Fumbles again and peers)*. The Blue Boar in Jermyn Street.

TOM. Lodges in that old stable, when he's ten thousand a year!

KATE. Go on, ma'am.

LADY ANNE. " . . . within the hour, travelling by post from Plymouth, I make haste to dispatch you this intimation that I shall do myself the honour to wait upon yourself, my fair cousins, and Mr. Pettigrew, at a half after five this evening, in Berkeley Square. I subscribe myself, Madam, your most obedient cousin and humble servant, Peter Standish. To the Lady Anne Pettigrew."

KATE. Our cousin's letter is well bred.

LADY ANNE. Mr. Standish's letters from New York have already vouched for his parts.

TOM. And Messrs. Baring's discreet replies, for his substance.

LADY ANNE *(Surveying* KATE *thoughtfully)*. You look charming, my child.

TOM. Such blushes, too. Art or nature?

KATE. More natural than wit in you.

TOM. Your husband will find you sharp of tongue, my lass.

[*Clock outside on landing strikes once.* TOM *looks at his watch.*]

A quarter after five o'clock. The cavalier should be here ere long.

LADY ANNE *(After a moment's thought)*. Tom, you will greet him below and bring him up the stairs. *(To* KATE.*)* And *you* will welcome him, on my behalf.

KATE. Not—alone? Surely you will present him to me?

TOM. My sister fears that she would make herself cheap.

LADY ANNE. Hold your tongue! *(To* KATE*)*. You will do as I tell you. When I return, I shall know—

TOM. The baggage is bashful! Where learnt you this trick, Kate? Gad's blood, if only he'll have you!

LADY ANNE. He wants an English wife, and he commends Kate's miniature. Where else could he aspire to such a connection?

TOM. Our mother is ingenious. If you fail to please in person as you did by post, there's still another daughter. . . .

LADY ANNE. What insolence is this?

TOM *(A bit cowed, but pressing on)*. My poor friend Throstle's fifteen hundred a year is scarcely to be set against ten thousand. . . .

LADY ANNE. Enough of your crude jesting. You well know whom Helen is to marry.

KATE. But Helen's disposition, ma'am. . . . *(Sits by Mother on settee.)*

LADY ANNE. You may safely leave Helen's fancies to me, and trust her mother to act in her interests.

TOM *(To* KATE*)*. Ay, and in ours too. And as for your prejudices against my friend Throstle. . . .

KATE. Your friend, while you can borrow from him!

TOM. Gad, even tailors have to be paid somehow.

KATE. The disgusting little man!

LADY ANNE. Kate!

TOM. What's wrong with him? Teeth none too good, perhaps, but an artist, a man of parts, not without generosity.

KATE. Such as you hope to find in Mr. Standish! *(To* LADY ANNE*)*. He'll ruin everything! *(To* TOM*)*. I wish you'd go racing at Newmarket for the week!

TOM. And who then would drynurse Master Colonial?

LADY ANNE. You are not to say Colonial. The Colonists are now independent.

TOM. Yankee puppy, then.

LADY ANNE. Peter Standish is your cousin!

TOM. What was his father? A fur dealer, a tradesman!

LADY ANNE. His grandfather built this house.

TOM. And lost his money—fled to America with the scum o' the country and married God knows whom there.

KATE. Drynurse indeed! You think to find him drink, women, and cards, so that he pay for yours.

TOM. I shall. But I will get you your husband.

LADY ANNE. You grow offensive, sir!

KATE. And is it likely that such a man as our cousin will put himself in your hands?

TOM. Such a man! His polite letters have foxed you, Kitty.

LADY ANNE. What do you know of him?

TOM *(Mischievously)*. Bill Clinton told me he's a devil of a temper. Got cashiered from the rebel army for insubordination.

LADY ANNE *(Anxiously)*. Every woman likes a man of spirit. What else did Clinton say?

TOM *(Laughing)*. That he can drink any two men of us here under the table! That the mothers in the Yankee villages locked up their daughters when Captain Peter Standish was looking for billets!

LADY ANNE *(Angrily, anxiously looking towards* KATE*)*. These are monstrous lies!

KATE. He thinks to disturb me, ma'am, with absurd inventions.

TOM *(Indignant)*. Inventions! *(Laughs again.)* I leave those to your Yankee! Clinton says he's always inventing things—strange machines to do all our work.

KATE *(Indifferently)*. Our cousin has written me of his hobbies.

TOM *(Embarrassed)*. I had thought to put him down at White's, ma'am, we might lighten his load of dollars there. But at the moment that attention is beyond me.

LADY ANNE *(Suspiciously)*. Indeed! And why?

TOM. Because of a slight put upon me by the committee.

KATE. He's been posted at his club.

TOM *(Sheepishly)*. If I am to show him proper civility, I must beg a hundred pounds of you, ma'am.

LADY ANNE. You had fifty but Tuesday!

KATE. Gambling again!

TOM. Am I to parade our wretched poverty before the town? I am a gentleman and do as my equals.

KATE. Need you scatter months of our pin money in an evening?

TOM *(To* KATE*)*. Think you I'd grudge you a hundred pounds had I a settlement of fifteen thousand all but in my hands?

LADY ANNE. You are insupportable: I know not where to turn for money.

TOM. After this once, ma'am, I'll not need to trouble you more.

KATE. He means to rob our cousin.

TOM *(Snarling, turning on her)*. How dare you!

KATE. Rook, then.

TOM. D'you mean I play unfairly, wench?

LADY ANNE. Kate! Thomas!

[*Enter* MAID R.—*announcing.*]

MAID. Mr. Throstle, your ladyship.

[THROSTLE *enters* R. *A dandified, fussy, precious little man of forty odd. Exit* MAID. LADY ANNE *and* KATE *rise. Bows and curtseys exchanged.*]

THROSTLE. Your servant, Lady Anne. Miss Pettigrew. Your servant, sir.

[*Ladies resume seats.*]

LADY ANNE. Even the rain cannot keep faithful Mr. Throstle away.

[Tom *sits in chair by door* R., *reads newspaper.*]

Throstle. Madam, I learned at the Bull that a certain coach has borne a precious freight to London. . . .

Lady Anne *(Smiling on him).* She will be down directly, sir; she stays only to change her gown.

Throstle. Miss Helen indeed comes first in my thoughts, even when my curiosity is so lively respecting your Croesus of a cousin . . . whose arrival. . . .

Tom *(Puts down paper.)* Does anything ever happen that you don't hear of it on the instant, Throstle?

Lady Anne. He'll be with us at any moment, now.

Throstle. Mr. Standish, I gather, has never been in England? If I can be of assistance, in effecting introductions. . . .

Lady Anne. Oh, sir, we shall indeed make bold to enlist your help.

Tom. And we'll need it, Throstle! If only he'll imitate his betters, but these Yankees! With the French on our backs, 'twan't worth our trouble to catch and hang the lot, so they say they won the war!

Lady Anne. You are not to mention the late war with America!

Tom. You don't know these Yankees. 'Twont be I who'll mention it.

[*Enter* Helen, L. *A girl of twenty, simply dressed. A wistful, sensitive face. She is in all respects a contrast to her polished and worldly sister.*]

THROSTLE *(Kissing her hand)*. Your most devoted, faithful slave, now as always, dear Miss Helen.

HELEN *(Curtseys.)* I am your servant, sir.

THROSTLE. The week of your absence has been to me a desert.

HELEN *(Absently)*. Thank you, sir.

KATE *(Bursts out to* HELEN.*)* Cousin Peter's in London!

HELEN. He's on his way to us now?

TOM. Helen! Observe Kate's maidenish agitation! Mother has contrived that she's to meet him first, and alone.

HELEN. Mother! What *will* Cousin Peter think?

LADY ANNE *(Severely)*. Think? What should he think? . . . Our Cousin has written, Mr. Throstle, that he would buy a town house, a country estate. . . .

TOM. And a wife!

HELEN. Oh, Tom!

THROSTLE *(Interposing)*. The lady upon whom Mr. Standish prevails then need not exchange our civilized society for Mr. Washington's crude democracy?

LADY ANNE. What Miss of quality would leave London for the Colonies?

TOM. *Now* who said Colonies?

HELEN. I hear a coach.

[*Noise of coach—it stops.* TOM *hurries to window* R., *draws back curtains,* KATE *and* LADY ANNE *go to window* L., *peer into street.*]

LADY ANNE. 'Tis he! Look, Kate! A most elegant young man!

TOM *(With faint sneer)*. His back is most elegant.

LADY ANNE *(Turning)*. Now, Tom, downstairs to him.

TOM. Good luck with your savage, Kate!

KATE. Savage or not, there's to be no sneering.

TOM. You'll need those blushes now.

[*Exit* R.]

LADY ANNE. Come, come into the drawing-room. *(She waves* THROSTLE *out* L.*)*

[*He goes out.*]

He is the handsomest man, Kate!

KATE *(Hysterically)*. This is too much, ma'am! Would you have me sell myself to pay our debts?

LADY ANNE. Kate, dear Kate, I meant no such thing. You're to have no man who does not please you.

[*Noise of coach turning outside.*]

Come, Helen!

[*Exit* L.]

KATE *(Hurries* L. *almost to door, detains* HELEN.*)* Mother presses me so. Oh, Helen, will he be as we pictured him?

HELEN *(Playfully)*. How indeed can I know? I've not even seen his back!

KATE. Tom has heard dreadful things. . . .

HELEN. I believe he will be—all that you could wish for.

KATE. Then *he* may not care for me!

HELEN. He will, dearest, he will!

KATE. Why must mother make it so hard. . . .

HELEN. I know. But only be yourself, Kate. *(In tenderly chaffing tones).* Our cousin will not eat you.

[KATE *smiles at her gratefully.*]

(Exit HELEN, *closing door.)*

[KATE, *left alone, shows her extreme tension; she crosses to window* L., *looks out, looks in mirror, glances at door* R., *then as though in sudden panic goes to door* L., *pulls herself together, walks* C. *expectantly. Knock at door* R. KATE *faces it, holding herself together.*]

KATE. Enter!

[*Enter* TOM. KATE *shows surprise and disappointment. He looks around, laughs, puzzled.*]

TOM. Where's your Yankee?

KATE. What have you done with him?

TOM. I thought he must have let himself in. Wilkins says there was no knock.

KATE. She did not hear it for the rain. He's on the doorstep!

TOM. Gad, then he must be fetched to you quickly, or this rain will cool him off.

[*Exit* TOM R., *laughing, leaving door slightly ajar.* KATE *again walks about nervously, turns quickly as* TOM *enters,* R., *closing door after him.*]

Damned if I can find him!

KATE *(Exasperated).* We saw him, at the door!

TOM. I looked—there was no one there.

KATE. Then *someone* has let him in!

TOM *(Thinks a moment, laughs.)* He's gone round to the servants' door. Knows his place. *(As he walks rapidly* L. *and goes out chuckling).* I'll bring him up the back stairs!

[KATE'S *nervousness increases. Noise of wind and rain, which has been slightly audible since* HELEN *left* KATE *alone, rises to greater intensity.* KATE, *with quick nervous glances about her, stands* C., *then walks slowly to settee, sits on it, arranging her dress and folding her hands in attractive pose. Clock strikes without, twice. Door* R. *commences to open slowly.* KATE *jumps up and walks* R. C. *just beyond table. She halts as the door stops for a moment. It then opens more rapidly, and as the shadow of a man is thrown upon the wall* L., KATE *curtseys slowly. As she starts to curtsey, the lights commence to dim and the curtain to fall; just as she has reached the floor the lights are out and the curtain down.*]

SCENE TWO

[*The same room, at the same time, on the same day, in 1928. Most of the furniture remains, but the tone of time has settled upon it, and there are some changes. The windows now have curtains and dif-*

ferent shaped pelmets of flowered linen, a copy of a Georgian pattern on a blue ground, and between them, in place of the tapestry, is a three-quarter length portrait of a young man in Eighteenth Century costume, by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Electric light above portrait. Through the windows the bare trees of the Square are seen, in pale, rain-washed sunlight. A plain panel replaces the landscape above the fire. The writing-bureau is open, littered with papers and books, and has a lamp on it and an Egyptian antique, a crux ansata in blue faience, about four inches high, mounted on small ebony block. No candles on candle-slides. The low tea table, which before stood folded between window and fireplace, now stands in place of the walnut cabriole-leg table at the L. C. *of the stage; it is open, holds another litter of pipes, papers, books, matches and a brass candlestick. To* R. *of table, a modern over-stuffed armchair; to* L. *of table, an over-stuffed couch, both covered with the same material as the curtains. Back of the couch stands the old cabriole-leg table (now hidden) and on this, a large electric lamp. The console table remains where it was, but it is now bare. The stools have gone, and one of the walnut chairs stands before writing bureau.*]

(As the curtain rises the clock on the landing strikes five, a wheezy, feeble chime, distinct from the full-throated strokes of the clock in the previous scene.)

*(*Mrs. Barwick, *an elderly housekeeper, dressed in grey with a white apron, opens door* r. *and stands aside to admit the* Ambassador, *a man in the late sixties, distinguished, suave, urbane, sensitive.)*

Mrs. Barwick *(With exaggerated deference)*. If you'll wait here, Your Excellency, I'll tell Mr. Standish. I'm not sure he's dressed, sir.

Ambassador. Isn't he well?

Mrs. Barwick *(Doubtfully)*. Oh yes, sir. I think so, sir. *(She turns to go* r.*)*

Ambassador. One moment. Miss Frant has been telling me how you take such good care of Mr. Standish.

Mrs. Barwick *(Flattered)*. I do my best for him, sir.

Ambassador. Just between ourselves, Miss Frant's a little worried about him.

Mrs. Barwick. He's a bit of a quiet one, Your Excellency. I'm sure I hope there's nothing to worry about, begging your pardon, sir. I mean he's a gentleman of moods. Yes, sir, a gentleman of moods.

Ambassador *(Smiling)*. You mean he has good moods—and bad ones?

Mrs. Barwick. Oh no, sir, I didn't mean it that way. But there are times when he does seem, well, just a bit jumpy.

Ambassador. Really?

Mrs. Barwick *(Gossiping)*. Oh, nothing you could put your finger on, Your Excellency. But it does seem a pity he should stay around the house so much.

Ambassador. Well, it's quite true that I haven't seen

him about at all lately, come to think of it. Tell me, how does he spend his time cooped up here?

MRS. BARWICK. Well, sir, he seems to me to spend most of his time reading. When he isn't just walking about. I keep hearing him in the night, sir. It seems he's found some old books and papers in the house here. Of course, sir, I don't exactly know, but I sometimes think—

[*Enter* PETER STANDISH, R., *nervous, sensitive, a man of about twenty-six. He wears a long, black dressing-gown. His manner is feverish; his impatience at being disturbed by an unwelcome visit is tempered by respect for his visitor.*]

PETER. MR. AMBASSADOR! I heard the bell, but I didn't expect such an honour. Excuse me, I'll just run and put my coat on.

AMBASSADOR. Nonsense, Mr. Standish, don't do that.

[*They shake hands,* MRS. BARWICK *draws curtains.*]

It's a very becoming dressing-gown.

PETER. But I can't receive an Ambassador like this. I ought to be wearing something—well—more respectful.

AMBASSADOR. Don't worry. The Foreign Secretary once received me in pajamas.

[PETER *snaps switch by door* R., *lighting lamp on desk, lamp on table* L., *lamp over portrait.* AMBASSADOR *sits on settee.*]

PETER. Did he? Well, I'll go put mine on if that

would seem more appropriate. I'm not up on how to receive Ambassadors. I don't know that one ever called on me before, but I can manage to give you some tea if you like.

AMBASSADOR. How quickly we Yankees take to that, over here.

PETER. Tea, please, Mrs. Barwick.

[*She goes out* R.]

[PETER *walks about nervously.*]

Yes, it doesn't take long to get to like tea, does it? I don't mean the tea itself, but what it stands for, that we don't get at home—sort of charming rest period, general let up and all that sort of thing.

AMBASSADOR. But they tell me that even here those dreadful cocktails will soon have made tea obsolete.

PETER. Yes, cocktails, jazz and one universal traffic block—London's just like New York. *(Lights cigarette from case in pocket of dressing gown.)*

AMBASSADOR. Excepting the weather, which is infinitely worse.

PETER. Has it been bad? I hardly realise there's been any weather.

AMBASSADOR. Haven't been going out much, eh?

PETER. Not a great deal, no.

AMBASSADOR. You're feeling fit, aren't you, Standish?

PETER. Oh, pretty much as usual. What makes you ask?

AMBASSADOR. Nothing in particular. I just wondered why I haven't seen you anywhere all these weeks.

PETER. Well, this house has really been taking all my time.

AMBASSADOR. Yes, indeed, it is a delightful place. I read about it in *The Times*.

[PETER *pauses before portrait, looking up at it.*]

You're really going to settle down here?

PETER. I wouldn't live anywhere else in the world.

AMBASSADOR. Well, I don't blame you. I couldn't make out from the article why your remote English cousin left you the place. Your family didn't know him, from what I gather?

PETER *(Wandering about nervously, back stage)*. No, but old Standish Pettigrew read a paper of mine on architecture and wrote me about this Queen Anne house. That's how we came to meet. It turned out a Standish ancestor of mine had built the place.

AMBASSADOR. The first Standish who went to America?

PETER. Yes, about 1730. *(Points to portrait.)* His grandfather.

AMBASSADOR. I suppose everybody comments on the likeness? You might have sat for it yourself.

PETER *(Constrained)*. Oh yes, curious, isn't it? His name happens to have been Peter Standish, too.

AMBASSADOR. And that's still more curious. *(Rises, walks to portrait, looking up at it.)* Perhaps what impressed your cousin was the coincidence—the likeness, and then the name.

[PETER, *about to speak, checks himself.* MRS. BARWICK *enters* R. *to table with tea-tray, arranges tea.*]

And the house itself is as strange as the legacy—two hundred years old, and yet apparently just as it was, furniture, everything!

PETER. Yes, old Mr. Pettigrew left nearly every stick as he found it.

AMBASSADOR *(Picks up crux ansata from desk.)* But what about this thing? Surely this is Egyptian!

PETER. It's the Crux Ansata: the symbol of life.

AMBASSADOR. Yes, but the symbol of Isis, not of Queen Anne. What's it doing here?

PETER. I don't know. It just came with the house.

AMBASSADOR *(Puts it down, walks to tea-table.)* Wedgwood! That came with the house, too?

PETER. Everything did. Even Mrs. Barwick there.

[MRS. BARWICK *smiles on them as she goes out,* R.]

Milk and sugar?

AMBASSADOR. Both, please.

[PETER, *after pouring tea and handing cup, pours out cup for himself, does not take it, instead lights cigarette from case, puffs nervously.* AMBASSADOR, *on settee, sips tea, eats muffin.*]

I suppose you'll entertain here a good deal?

PETER *(Resumes walking up and down.)* I couldn't afford to.

AMBASSADOR. But when you're married—

PETER. Oh, then! You'll have to ask Marjorie that.

AMBASSADOR. Charming girl. How lucky for you that she wants to live over here.

PETER. Oh, she loves the house, too. We're going to do it up.

AMBASSADOR. Do it up? Well, *you* can be trusted not to spoil it.

PETER. There's a new roof needed, and things like that. That'll all be her doing. You know I've no money.

AMBASSADOR. Marjorie was worried, I thought, that you didn't come to the Embassy reception last night. She came—*(Glances at him.)*—alone.

PETER. Did she? I told her I—didn't feel up to it.

AMBASSADOR. But I thought you said—H'm. It's too bad she's off to America to-morrow.

PETER *(Coming towards him)*. Yes, I suppose she's really going. But it's just some family affair; she's coming right back; the wedding isn't put off. I mean, our plans aren't changed.

AMBASSADOR. So she told me. We had quite a talk.

[PETER *sits in armchair, looks fixedly at* AMBASSADOR.]

PETER *(Politely challenging)*. Yes?

AMBASSADOR *(After pause)*. And I may as well admit I didn't come here, Standish, only to see the house.

PETER *(Dryly)*. I *had* flattered myself that what you really came to see was *me*.

AMBASSADOR. And of course you must think me a meddling old busy-body.

PETER. Oh, please, Mr. Ambassador! I do appreciate your kindness. But, you see, there's nothing wrong with me at all!

AMBASSADOR. Who said there was anything wrong? I suppose what you meant just now was that I'd come in to—look you over. Nobody likes being looked over, when there's no need for it.

PETER *(Smiling)*. Still less, when there is, I suppose.

AMBASSADOR. Anyway, you won't mind my suggesting that London is a very fascinating place.

PETER *(Enthusiastically)*. The most fascinating place in the world!

AMBASSADOR. Ah, good! Everybody's talking about the legacy; everybody'd be delighted to meet you.

PETER *(Ill at ease. Rises, walks to writing-bureau as he talks.)* I see what you're getting at. It's very thoughtful of you, but I'm very busy just now. Going through some old papers. *(Fumbles with papers.)*

AMBASSADOR. Too many old papers, Standish. People get morbid and musty, when they shut themselves up all alone in old houses. Marjorie is really quite disturbed about you.

PETER. I wish she wouldn't be. I can't go out just now. I've most important work to do here.

AMBASSADOR. Your studies in the eighteenth century are fascinating, no doubt, but surely not so pressing—

PETER *(Raising voice)*. But I've just got to stay here in the house!

AMBASSADOR *(Perplexed)*. Well, I musn't bore you with questions. But you *are* making your friends a bit

uneasy. Of course if there were anything I could do—though if you *will* make a hermit of yourself there probably isn't—

PETER *(Walks to tea-table.)* Well, as a matter of fact— *(Stops.)*

AMBASSADOR *(Encouragingly)*. Yes?

PETER. Well, if you could possibly manage to drop in here two or three times a week, regularly, while Marjorie is gone, I'd appreciate it enormously. Oh, but now I've said it I realise that for *me* to ask such a thing of *you* would be impertinent. And you probably haven't the time, anyway.

AMBASSADOR *(Puzzled)*. But why shouldn't *you* come and see *me?* And make it as often as you like.

PETER *(Struggling to avoid saying too much)*. Thanks, but, well, I don't know if I could. I mean, I might not want to!

AMBASSADOR *(Really shocked)*. But surely—

PETER. Oh, I simply can't make it any clearer just now. *(Sits in armchair.)*

AMBASSADOR. Look here, Standish, don't you think you ought to get away for a bit?

PETER *(A little wildly)*. Ah! get away! It would be great to get away, really away, into the blue, wouldn't it? You think I'm a bookworm, don't you? But there still *are* adventures, inconceivable adventures—

AMBASSADOR *(After pause)*. Won't you tell *me* what's the trouble?

PETER. I'd like to—it *isn't* trouble—it's—it's wonderful! *(Rises.)* Oh, I'd like there to be someone here

who *knows*—but I *can't*. We can't talk without using words, so what's the use of talking when there are no words? I understood it all till just now, when you asked me about it, and *now* I don't understand anything about it at all! *(Sits beside him on settee.)* Now look here. Suppose you are in a boat, sailing down a winding stream. You watch the banks as they pass you. You went by a grove of maple trees, upstream. But you can't see them now, so you saw them in the *past,* didn't you? You're watching a field of clover now; it's before your eyes at this moment, in the *present.* But you don't know yet what's around the bend in the stream there ahead of you; there may be wonderful things, but you can't see them until you get around the bend, in the *future,* can you?

[AMBASSADOR *nods; he listens politely.*]

Now remember, *you're* in the boat. But *I'm* up in the sky above you, in a plane. I'm looking down on it all. I can see *all at once* the trees you saw upstream, the field of clover that you see now, and what's waiting for you, around the bend ahead! *All at once!* So the past, present, and future of the man in the boat are all *one,* to the man in the plane. Doesn't that show how all Time must really be one? Real Time—real Time is nothing but an idea in the mind of God!

[PETER *is panting and excited. Clock without strikes once.* AMBASSADOR *rises, consults watch. Turns, looks at* PETER *reflectively.*]

AMBASSADOR. I suppose that old grandfather clock came with the house, too?

PETER. Yes, it's ticked away five generations—and it's ticking away now, back in that other time!

AMBASSADOR *(Replaces watch.)* H'm. Other time. *(Walks towards picture, looking at it.)* A quarter past five already. Wasn't Marjorie coming to tea?

PETER *(Tense, half-turned around on settee, watching him closely).* Oh yes, I think she was. She told you?

AMBASSADOR *(Warily).* That portrait now. *(Turns to* PETER.*)* One might almost think that—

[*He stops at* PETER'S *excited movement.*]

Of course, none of us believes in ghosts at home, but over here, in these old houses—

PETER *(Interrupting).* Who said anything about ghosts? *(Jumps up.) He* isn't a ghost. He's alive, alive, alive! I don't mean now; he's dead now, of course; I mean then; I mean back there in his own time, back there where that clock's ticking, just as it's ticking here, now! *(Hurries excitedly to window L., throwing back curtains.)* How would you like to walk the quiet streets of London in the eighteenth century? And breathe pure air, instead of gasoline! And ride in Sedan-chairs, instead of taxi-cabs! *(Coming down to* AMBASSADOR*).* See Sheridan at the first night of "The School for Scandal", or hear Dr. Johnson say the things Boswell wrote, *(Turning, looks at portrait)* or watch Reynolds at work on— *(Turns again and stops, meeting* AMBASSADOR'S *grave, steady look.)*

AMBASSADOR *(Gently taking* PETER'S *arm).* Yes, Standish, it does sound attractive, but it isn't a thing we'd really do, even if we could. And if we felt anything

like *that* coming on, we'd clear out, even out of a wonderful house like this.

PETER *(Impatiently throws off his arm.)* Oh, I'd like to see anybody try to clear me out, *now!*

AMBASSADOR. If we *could* get back, we'd seem worse than ghosts to all the people in the other time; we'd seem to them things that hadn't even been born yet!

PETER. They wouldn't know.

AMBASSADOR. They'd find us out, Standish—we'd make *slips.*

PETER. Oh no, we wouldn't, we couldn't, don't you see, because what happened back there is real, does really happen, of course, it *has* happened. So if anybody *could* change places with somebody back there, it would only be a charade: he'd have to do all the things that the other fellow had done. He couldn't change anything in the eighteenth century that really *had happened* in the eighteenth century, could he?

AMBASSADOR. H'm. Change places.

PETER *(Excitedly).* Yes, *change places!* Oh, but I was a fool to tell you. And now I suppose you'll go and ring up a specialist.

AMBASSADOR *(Ignoring this).* I still don't see what credentials we could take back into the past that would make them accept us as even human.

PETER *(Triumphantly).* Ah, credentials! *(Rushes to writing-bureau, rummages among papers, comes back waving small book above his head.)* Here's my passport!

AMBASSADOR. What's that?

PETER. It's *his* diary! *(Sits by him on settee, opening leaves, speaks with feverish rapidity.)* He's put everything down! I've learned it almost word for word. That's what I've been doing! *(Looks in diary.)* His trip from New York took twenty-seven days, in a barque called the *General Wolfe*. No wonder he calls the trip "dreary". He fought under Washington. The war was just over, but he made friends with an English Major Clinton on the boat. Peter was an inventor, when all that was just beginning, that's why he wants to see into our wonderful new age of machinery that he senses ahead of him! *(Turning leaves)*. It says Reynolds wouldn't finish the portrait. *(Turns to picture.)* But he did finish it. It's obviously all Reynolds! *(Presses diary into* AMBASSADOR'S *hands.)* Look! *(Points to passages.)* He married the elder sister, you see! Kate—that's Kate Pettigrew. They lived in this house. I've other papers about them—they had children, who died here. See! There was a younger sister, Helen. Her people tried to force her into a marriage she hated. The diary stops before that was settled. Look! There's even something about a Kashmir shawl that Helen's aunt in the country gave her just before Peter came over. Minute details about everything, you see!

[AMBASSADOR *hands diary back.*]

And I've got his letters, courting Kate before he'd ever seen her. *(Dashes to bureau, sits, rummages.)* They were in a secret drawer here. I've got the letter Peter wrote Lady Anne—the girl's mother—when he'd

just arrived from New York. *(Jumps up.)* Oh, damn! I know where I left it! You *must* see that!

[PETER *hurries out* L.]

[AMBASSADOR *looks after him intently, then rises, walks to portrait, stands looking up at it.* MRS. BARWICK *opens door* R. MARJORIE FRANT *enters, an attractive girl in the late twenties, dressed with sensible good taste.*]

[MRS. BARWICK *goes out.*]

MARJORIE. Mr. Ambassador!

[*He turns.*]

What a surprise! Isn't Peter here?

AMBASSADOR *(They shake hands.)* He'll be back in a minute, Marjorie.

MARJORIE *(Takes off hat, puts it on table* L., *walks to settee as she says)* You came because of what I said last night, and I'm so grateful for your sympathy and your—

AMBASSADOR *(Follows her. Interrupts, speaks gravely and quickly.)* I'm going to leave you together.

MARJORIE *(Alarmed at his tone).* Why, what's the matter?

AMBASSADOR. If you have to sail to-morrow, try your very best to persuade him to go with you. But whatever happens, he *must* be got out of this house! When you leave him come to me at the Embassy. There's no time now to explain. Sh! *(Turns, walks* R.*)*

[MARJORIE *sits on settee.* PETER *enters* L., *reading letter, walks to* AMBASSADOR.]

PETER. Here it is. Read it.

AMBASSADOR. "From the Blue Boar in Jermyn Street, October 23rd, 1784."

PETER *(Triumphantly)*. October 23rd! That's to-day!

AMBASSADOR *(Looks up, then reads half to himself)* "Honoured madam: Having arrived within the hour, travelling by post from Plymouth, I make haste to dispatch you this intimation that I shall do myself the honour to wait upon yourself, my fair cousins, and Mr. Pettigrew, at a half after five this evening, in Berkeley Square. I subscribe myself, Madam, your most obedient cousin and humble servant, Peter Standish. To the Lady Anne Pettigrew." *(He hands the letter back to* PETER.*)*

PETER. The paper's yellow, and the ink faded—and yet, Lady Anne is just reading that letter, *now!*

MARJORIE *(Who has risen)*. Peter!

PETER *(Starts and faces* MARJORIE.*)* How long have you been here?

MARJORIE. Only a minute.

PETER. Oh. . . . I do hope you have a nice crossing . . . you're sailing to-morrow—isn't it?

[MARJORIE'S *lip trembles.*]

AMBASSADOR *(Looking at watch)*. You've made me forget an appointment. Good-bye, Marjorie.

[PETER *follows him to door* R.]

No, don't come down. *(Meaningly)*. I'll drop in here, Standish, as you suggested.

PETER. Oh, thank you!

[*Exit* AMBASSADOR, *leaving door ajar.*]

MARJORIE. Peter, what made you speak to me that way?

PETER *(Turns, walks to her before armchair.)* Was I rude? Forgive me. *(Kisses her.)* I was thinking of something else.

MARJORIE. What?

PETER *(Walks to bureau, handles papers.)* Only a job I've got to do. *(Lights cigarette from case.)*

MARJORIE. What were you talking about?

PETER. Just some eighteenth-century people.

MARJORIE *(Sits on settee.)* You're so nervous! Smoking too much, dear.

[PETER *crushes out cigarette.*]

Only a month now till I'll be living here to look after you. And you need it, Peter!

PETER *(Walking to armchair).* You don't want to marry me, Marjorie dear. You only want to look after me.

MARJORIE. One goes with the other.

PETER. You're so patient with me, so good, so kind.

MARJORIE. Peter, I want you to do something specially nice for me. I don't want to leave you, I want to be with you. Pack up and sail with me to-morrow—we'll come right back.

PETER *(Startled).* Oh no, I can't. I'd rather be here.

MARJORIE. Rather be here than with me? You do care more for this old house than—if you love me you will come!

PETER. I can't!

MARJORIE. You won't, you mean. Peter, darling, I don't know what's the matter, but you're not well; you're not yourself. Well, if you won't come then I won't go. I'm going to stay in London!

PETER *(Distressed)*. You told me you *had* to go!

MARJORIE. You want to get rid of me! You're so strange, you hold me off from you!

PETER. I must have this month here alone. Trust me!

MARJORIE. But, Peter, dear—you're so strange, you've never been like this. Why won't you tell me what it is? I *will* trust you, if you'll only just tell me—

PETER *(Distressed. Turns from her.)* But I can't; you'd—no, no—you mustn't ask it— *(Stops, listens. Noise of coach. In a low tense whisper)* What's that? *(He crosses rapidly to window* R. *and holds back curtains.)*

MARJORIE. What's that?

[*Faint noise of wind and rain.*]

PETER *(Turns at window.)* Sounded like a wagon rattling over cobblestones. It seemed to stop here. *(Looking up at portrait)*. But there's only your car at the door.

MARJORIE. I didn't hear anything. Cobblestones, in Berkeley Square? Why, they've had wood blocks for ages; it's quieter ever than our asphalt in New York. Peter, what's the matter with you?

[*The electric lights go out. Noise of wind and rain increases.*]

Oh dear!

PETER. I'll light a candle. *(Lights candle on tea-table.)*

MARJORIE. Darling, your hand's shaking! Ring, Peter. Get somebody to fix the lights!

[*Enter* MRS. BARWICK, R., *carrying candle. She stops a few steps inside door.* PETER *faces her behind tea-table, holding candle.*]

MRS. BARWICK. A gentleman to see you, sir. Just as he came in the lights went out all over the house. He's all muffled up.

MARJORIE. Who is he?

MRS. BARWICK. When I asked his name he only said again, "Mr. Peter Standish." I've shown him into the study.

[PETER *walks slowly to door* R. *as if in a trance.*]

MARJORIE. Peter, who is it?

[*He walks on, unheeding.*]

Peter! It's my very last evening.

PETER *(Speaking in a dead cold voice).* There's no time. No Time!

[*Exit* PETER, *closing door behind him.*]

MARJORIE *(Hysterical).* Who is this man?

MRS. BARWICK. I don't know, miss.

MARJORIE *(Crying).* He heard noises in the street, when there were no noises.

MRS. BARWICK. He's not himself, miss. I'll get a lamp and then see to the lights.

[*She goes out* L.]

[*Door* R. *opens slowly. Pale light from candle carried by the man who is opening the door. Wind and rain heard more loudly again. Clock on landing strikes twice.* MARJORIE *runs to door with a cry of recognition.*]

MARJORIE. Peter!

[MARJORIE *stops suddenly, face to face with man at door, who is invisible to audience. Steps back.*]

Peter! I'm afraid of you! *(Little nervous laugh).* Isn't it absurd, to be afraid of my Peter! *(Another step back).*

QUICK CURTAIN

[*The instant the curtain is down* MARJORIE *screams.*]

SCENE THREE

The room in the Past. Clock is heard to strike twice, an instant before the curtain goes up. The curtain rises at the exact moment when it fell upon Scene I. Noise of wind and rain. The lights fade in slowly.

(KATE, *discovered at the bottom of her curtsey, rises from it as the door fully opens. Noise of wind and rain stops, as* PETER *enters slowly in the costume of the man in the portrait. Dazed, he stares at her, shrinking back against the door, his hand on the knob. Staring at him, she curtseys again.)*

KATE. Your servant, sir. *(Pause)*. At your service, cousin.

PETER *(At length)*. Who—are you?

KATE. Kate Pettigrew.

PETER *(In awe and wonder)*. Kate—Pettigrew!

[KATE *walks towards him, extends her hand to be kissed.* PETER *takes step forward doubtfully, as though not quite sure whether* KATE *is really flesh and blood. At length he takes her hand, awkwardly, bows and kisses it, then retreats two steps towards door.*]

KATE. I bid you welcome, on mother's behalf.

PETER. Your mother. The Lady Anne. I trust she is well?

KATE. Indeed yes, I thank you.

[*Awkward silence.*]

PETER. It's raining awfully hard.

KATE *(Still extremely nervous)*. Yes, the weather has been wretched. But you'll find it nearly always so in London.

PETER. You have a great many fogs, haven't you?

KATE. Indeed yes, there was one last week that lasted three days. And they're getting worse than they used to be, with people burning more sea coal.

PETER *(At length, to cover his own lack of resource)*. You seem a little embarrassed, cousin.

KATE *(With nervous laugh)*. You are not exactly at your ease yourself.

PETER. You've never seen me before, have you?

KATE. That seems a strange question.

PETER. I mean, am I—different from what you expected?

KATE. Indeed I think you are, cousin. We were led to look for a bold, forward fellow.

PETER. I'm a little surprised, too—I thought that Kate would be—well . . .

KATE *(With a touch of spirit).* Not so timid? I trust you will find me not always such a ninny, and my conversation not limited to the weather. But I'm sure you've had a tiring journey after your voyage. Come, sit down and tell me about it.

[KATE *sits on settee,* PETER *remains standing.*] You said nothing of your voyage in your letter.

PETER. My letter!

KATE *(Surprised).* To my mother, from the "Blue Boar," where I hope they have made you comfortable.

PETER. My letter from the "Blue Boar"! *(Looking to her for confirmation).* Of course. I went there when the coach came in, and I've just come over from America.

KATE *(Surprised).* We did not think you had come from Poland.

PETER. In the *General Wolfe.*

KATE. Really! In the packet? Did you not swim across?

PETER *(Now reassured, laughs with her.)* In the *General Wolfe*—it took twenty-seven dreary days.

KATE. I suppose the sea is always dreary, but you had a swift passage.

PETER *(After pause)*. Yes, the wind was with us all the way; we must have almost beat the record.

KATE. Record?

PETER. Oh, that's an American word. I'm afraid you'll find that I use a lot of strange phrases. We're developing a new language over there.

KATE. You must instruct me in it.

PETER *(Goes to settee, sits by her awkwardly, still a little afraid.)* Kate, forgive me for being such a boor.

KATE *(Nervous, but coquettish since she likes him)*. Your manners have been unexceptionable.

PETER. But hardly appropriate for a man who has just met his betrothed for the first time.

KATE. Are we betrothed? I had not heard of it.

PETER. Come, don't tease me. It's been practically all arranged in our letters. *(Clumsily steals a kiss.)*

KATE *(Shrinking back)*. There's nothing settled yet, and this is more in keeping with what I have heard of your rough ways at home, sir.

PETER *(Taking his cue from her coquettish tone, and rather awkwardly attempting to act as he imagines his rôle demands)*. Come, Kate, don't call me sir. I'll certainly not call you miss. *(Seizes her arm.)* Call me Peter! Say it!

KATE *(Protestingly)*. Sir! Cousin!

[*Both rise,* PETER *makes to kiss her again—she escapes, laughing.*]

Peter, then! You'll think me a brazen creature to laugh at your clowning, but I'll have no more of it!

PETER. Come, Kate, it's all arranged. The settlement

was to be—fifteen thousand pounds, wasn't it? That's all for the lawyers. We two needed only a kiss to make sure.

KATE. I vow you are the most abrupt man! You are but the audacious fellow I told Helen we must expect.

PETER. Helen? Oh yes, your sister.

KATE. You've not even asked mother's permission to pay your addresses.

PETER. Must I do that?

KATE. Is it not invariably done?

PETER. Er—not in New York.

KATE *(Chaffing)*. This is London. These are strange manners you bring us from the United States. And do visitors in New York walk into people's houses without so much as a by your leave?

PETER *(Disturbed)*. I rang the bell.

KATE. Bell? What bell?

PETER. I mean, the knocker.

KATE. We saw you alight from your coach, but—who let you in?

PETER. The door was ajar. I walked in—to get out of the rain.

KATE. *(Accepting this)*. We wondered. . . . But your clothes are dry!

PETER. I wore a cloak.

KATE. Even your boots are dry!

[PETER *turns from her, fumbling for cigarette-case in waistcoat pocket. Absent-mindedly opens and extends silver case to her.*]

(Looking at it.) I had no miniature of *you,* although I wrote and asked you for one.

PETER *(Looks at miniature astonished, puts it back in pocket, fumbling in other pockets.)* Well, I preferred to present myself in the flesh. *(Brings jewelled bracelet out of pocket.)*

KATE. Oh, what is that?

[PETER *gallantly hands it to* Kate.]

Most charming. But . . . is this not a little premature?

PETER *(Puzzled).* Premature?

KATE *(Sits on settee.)* Does not this signify, in New York, what it does here?

PETER *(Understanding).* Of course. If you will have the declaration formal, I know how it was done—how it is done. *(Goes on one knee before her.)* Miss Pettigrew, fair cousin, will you be my wife?

KATE *(Laughing).* You go much too fast.

PETER. You'll not dislike me for that.

KATE. I've not said that I mislike you! *(She lets him slip the bracelet over her wrist.)*

[LADY ANNE *enters* L. PETER *springs up and back in alarm and confusion.* KATE *also rises.*]

Ma'am, I present our cousin, Mr. Peter Standish.

[PETER *stares at her,* LADY ANNE curtseys; *at length he kisses her hand.*]

LADY ANNE. Welcome, ten thousand welcomes, dear, dear cousin.

PETER. Lady Anne, forgive me. Kate's beauties have quite deprived me of my wits and speech.

KATE. A deceiving tongue you've brought with you from New York—Peter.

[LADY ANNE *looks from one to the other. After sigh of satisfaction, walks to settee, sits. Enter* HELEN, L., *rather quickly and disturbed, followed closely by* THROSTLE.]

LADY ANNE. Can you take your eyes from Kate to spare a nod for your cousin Helen?

[PETER and HELEN *stare and step towards each other.* KATE *sits in chair* L. *front.* HELEN *curtseys behind small table,* PETER *advances and kisses her hand.* TOM *slouches in* L.]

HELEN. Your servant, sir.

LADY ANNE. And our dear friend, Mr. Throstle, Mr. Standish.

[*They bow.*]

PETER. Mr. Throstle, of the Academy of Painters in Water Colour?

THROSTLE. I had not supposed a name so insignificant—

PETER. Oh, I have—been reading about you.

LADY ANNE. And your cousin Tom.

TOM *(Sniggers as they bow.)* The jest is against me, sir. I had thought to call a tailor in to you before you could face the town.

PETER *(Surveys his clothes uneasily.)* I'm afraid the jest is against me.

TOM. No, 'pon my oath; your coat's a better fit than

mine, and your scarf's perfection, sir. Eh, Kate, eh, mother, isn't he in the tone?

[*They laugh as* PETER *turns to them.*]

LADY ANNE. This sudden storm, cousin, so unusually violent for the time of year—I hope you were not incommoded.

KATE. His clothes were dry!

PETER. Oh, I was already in the coach when it really started to pour—I think it's clearing— *(Crosses to* L. *window, exclaims involuntarily.)* Oh, four lackeys with a Sedan-chair! *(He turns quickly, realising his mistake.)*

[*They are all staring at him.*]

HELEN. You speak, sir, as though you'd never before seen a Sedan-chair.

PETER. I don't believe I'd noticed one.

THROSTLE. Sir, I passed a dozen but now, and so must have you, on your way hither from the "Blue Boar".

PETER. I didn't see them.

LADY ANNE. Are the New York quality not borne abroad in their chairs?

PETER. No—they ride in—coaches.

LADY ANNE. Sit here by Kate, cousin.

[PETER *sits by* LADY ANNE *on settee,* TOM *sits before desk,* THROSTLE *brings up chair for* HELEN *behind small table, walks over to* TOM.]

Your boxes shall be fetched. Of course you remain with us.

PETER. If you will have me.

LADY ANNE. *If* we will have you! And had you an agreeable voyage, dear cousin?

PETER. A dreary twenty-seven days in the *General Wolfe.*

KATE. My brother has but now met with a shipmate of yours.

PETER *(Nervous and alert).* Indeed? Who was that?

TOM. Major Clinton.

PETER. Oh yes, of course, a most agreeable fellow.

TOM. Clinton told me of your ingenious inventions, sir. *(Laughs.)* Now that you're rid of us, you seem to think you're going to do great things in the Col—the United States.

PETER. Oh, I suppose we are. *(A little unnerved).* Our fathers—I mean we—have brought forth on that continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

LADY ANNE *(Astonished).* All men—created equal!

PETER. That is the proposition.

THROSTLE. But, sir, that proposition is absurd.

PETER. Of course it is absurd!

[THROSTLE *turns to* TOM. *They laugh together at* PETER.]

KATE. I'm fascinated by your strange theories that life in the future is all going to be so changed—and so exciting—

TOM *(With a faint sneer).* Especially in the United States.

PETER. Exciting? Oh, very, for people who like

bustle, and efficiency, but I'm sure people like—ourselves, in a hundred years, would give their eyes to get back here again!

TOM *(Rises, walks* C.*)* We shall be damnably mouldy in a hundred years. But if the present interests you, sir, I'm your man—cousin Tom will show you the town!

PETER *(It bursts out.)* Oh, yes!

TOM. Where shall I take him first? Cox's Museum and Ranelagh and Vauxhall—

PETER *(Eagerly)*. I want to see everything.

THROSTLE. Should your tastes prove more sober than Mr. Tom's, sir, my poor services as cicerone—

LADY ANNE. Yes, the exhibition, at the Royal Academy!

TOM *(Disgusted)*. Gad's life! *(Walks to bureau, sits.)*

THROSTLE. Sir, should you care to join me there tomorrow, I should be glad to present you to the President of the Academy, Sir Joshua.

PETER. Reynolds! *(Rises, glances at panel where picture hangs in 1928.)* Do you think he would paint my portrait?

[THROSTLE *walks over by* TOM.]

TOM. Ay—at a hundred guineas.

PETER. Five hundred dollars—a Reynolds!

LADY ANNE. Indeed, a monstrous price! But's he's the fashion.

[PETER *resumes seat.*]

PETER *(To* THROSTLE*)*. Oh, thank you! Of course I'll come. My curiosity will wear you all out. But I

mustn't make myself a nuisance, *(Turns to* KATE.*)* except to my cousins—

TOM. You may regard our friend Throstle, cousin, as one of the family.

PETER. Indeed?

TOM. I think I may go so far as to say, as a prospective brother-in-law, eh, Throstle?

[HELEN *rises in mingled shame and anger.* THROSTLE *turns protestingly to* TOM. *General constraint.* PETER *looks at her.* HELEN *sits again, choking back her tears.*]

(Smiles sourly at PETER.*)* Poor Tom is always putting his foot in it!

[PETER *tactfully gets up, walks behind settee towards console table.*]

PETER *(Handling china).* What a magnificent piece! Finest old Chelsea!

KATE *(Laughing).* Five and sixpence, in the Shepherd's Market!

PETER. Forgive my ignorance. *(Looking around room).* I've been admiring your Queen Anne chairs, Lady Anne.

[THROSTLE *turns to* TOM*; they show their contempt at* PETER'S *breach of taste.*]

LADY ANNE. Ay, to our shame, it is so; the wars have impoverished so many of us here, dear cousin, alas, we cannot afford to rid ourselves of our old rubbish.

[*There is an awkward silence.* PETER *returns to settee, resumes seat.*]

KATE. Do you dance, cousin?

PETER. Why, of course.

KATE *(Pleased)*. I could not have endured you else.

TOM. Our cousin has all the talents.

LADY ANNE. Helen's birthday, indeed, comes at a most opportune moment, cousin.

KATE. Yes, there's to be a ball here next week.

PETER. Er—what do you dance, in London?

KATE. Why, what everybody dances. Gavottes, minuets.

PETER. I fear I shall disgrace you. *(He has been looking at* HELEN.*)* Your birthday dance, cousin! Then your aunt's gift is your birthday present!

LADY ANNE. Gift! What gift, Helen?

PETER. Why, the Kashmir shawl.

KATE. Oh, Helen, you sly puss!

HELEN *(Rises. Bewildered, to* PETER*)*. Is it a shawl?

LADY ANNE *(To* HELEN*)*. Why, pray, have you kept this from us?

HELEN. Aunt Willoughby gave me a parcel for my birthday, but I wasn't to open it until then. I haven't opened it. I don't know what's in it.

[*All but* PETER *make some exclamation.*]

[HELEN *goes out quickly* L.]

[TOM *rises, comes front;* THROSTLE *moves down.*]

TOM. Damme, what conjuror's trick is this?

PETER *(Embarrassed, worried)*. Why all this fuss about a shawl?

KATE. But how did you know about Helen's present?

LADY ANNE. And how do you know it's a shawl?

KATE *(Wagging finger)*. Naughty man! I believe 'tis an American joke.

PETER. Joke?

[HELEN *re-enters with Kashmir shawl, stops behind small table, showing it to them all.* THROSTLE *fingers it.*]

TOM. A shawl, so it is, by Gad!

KATE. Cousin, how did you know?

LADY ANNE. Indeed, how, cousin? Come, come, sir.

PETER. I'm heartily sorry. I got muddled somehow.

TOM. Muddled, sir, muddled! 'Tis not you who are muddled!

KATE. Have pity on us, you tricksy man.

HELEN. Indeed, cousin, plague us no more.

[PETER *is silent.*]

TOM. 's life, you make rare sport of us, sir.

THROSTLE. My friend, Mr. Boswell, says such feats as this are common, in Scotland.

LADY ANNE. Come, we'll take no refusal. How *did* you know?

PETER. I've forgotten.

LADY ANNE. How can you be so teasing? Come, come!

TOM. Here's a rival for you, Helen.

HELEN. I'm sure 'tis very strange. *(Puts shawl down on small table.)*

TOM. Lookee, cousin, can you read thoughts?

PETER. Of course not!

HELEN. It wasn't reading thoughts. *I* didn't know.

KATE. Pray solve us your riddle, Peter!

PETER. I must have heard about the shawl. I told you I'd forgotten where.

LADY ANNE. Sir, you but now reached London from America.

HELEN *(Steps towards* PETER.*)* I'm afraid Cousin Peter is not well.

PETER *(Rises, looks at her gratefully.)* No, I'm not. I can't think. . . . The truth is, I suppose it's the trip, I've rather a tiresome headache.

LADY ANNE. Your poor head. Oh, you must rest, after so long a journey.

PETER. Yes—a very long journey.

KATE *(Rises.)* I'll fetch you a compress.

[*Exit* L.]

[TOM *goes to window* R., *looks out, as* THROSTLE *comes to* LADY ANNE, *kisses her hand.*]

THROSTLE. I must take my leave. *(Kisses* HELEN'S *hand. Bows to* PETER.*)* Command me, sir, if and when Tom's more full-blooded entertainment palls.

PETER *(Bowing)*. Indeed I shall.

TOM *(At window)*. The rain has stopped, Throstle. Come to the stables and see my new smoker from Newmarket.

THROSTLE. If you'll come to Duke Street and see my new aquatint.

TOM *(As they go out* R. *together)*. Damn your aquatint.

THROSTLE *(Tittering)*. Damn your horses, then!

LADY ANNE *(Rises. To* PETER*)*. I must see to your room, sir.

[PETER *walks* L. *and holds door open for* LADY ANNE.]

(As she goes out, curtseys.) We are so, so happy to greet you here, dear, dear cousin.

[PETER *bows, turns and finds himself facing* HELEN, *who has followed* LADY ANNE *as though to go out. They look at one another for a moment.*]

HELEN *(Moving back in front of settee)*. Won't you sit down, cousin?

PETER. Thanks so much for helping me out.

HELEN *(Smiling)*. There wasn't anything really the matter with your head, was there?

PETER. No, not exactly, but you were the only one who saw—or, at any rate, you made them stop bothering me.

HELEN. I didn't see how you could know about my shawl.

PETER. Please be an angel and don't ask me any more about the confounded thing.

HELEN *(Sits on settee.)* If you wish.

PETER. Oh, thank you. Just as soon as I saw you I felt, here's someone I can talk to. You'll help me out here, won't you? *(Sits beside her.)*

HELEN. How can *I* help you, cousin?

PETER. It's all so strange.

HELEN. Strange?

PETER. All this.

HELEN. England? London?

PETER. Yes. I didn't think it would, but it makes me —uncomfortable. You see that, I see that you see it. I— I feel like a fish out of water.

HELEN. Kate will soon put you at your ease.

PETER. I'm sure she'll try. Oh, there's so much I want to ask you, I don't know where to begin.

HELEN. We're all most anxious to make you feel at home here.

PETER. Helen—are you really engaged to Mr.— Mr.—

HELEN. Mr. Throstle.

PETER. Forgive me. It's none of my business. But I thought your brother said—

HELEN *(Flashing. Turning from him)*. He had no *right* to say it!

PETER. I thought so! I could see that you weren't in love with him.

HELEN *(Turns back to him.)* Do you think that's reason enough not to marry him?

PETER. Of course. Well, Helen, we'll make a bargain. You help me out and I'll back you up.

HELEN *(Rising and speaking eagerly)*. Will you?

PETER *(Rising)*. Yes, I will! . . . But—I'd forgotten. I can't interfere with things that happen, that really *do* happen. *(Lamely)*. My position here is so—so unusual.

HELEN. Oh, but you can. You don't realise yet what your position here is. They'll do anything you wish.

PETER. Yes, but . . . Oh, you can't understand this

—whatever I may think or feel, everything's bound to go on as it did—I mean as it would—without my being here. Perhaps you really *do* marry him, after all.

HELEN. Never!

PETER. That's the spirit! I don't like the little fellow. And, anyway, I'm sure there isn't anybody good enough . . . why do you look at me like that?

HELEN. I don't know.

PETER *(Earnestly)*. Is there anything strange, or wrong, about me?

HELEN. Strange, or wrong?

PETER. I'm an American, you know. Just come into this new world. That's why I'm nervous.

HELEN. Is it? *(Picks up shawl.)* My sister will join you in a moment. *(Turns to go* R.*)*

PETER *(Following her, pleadingly)*. Don't go. Just to see you steadied me. I've nothing in common with the others.

HELEN *(Turning to him at door. Meaningly)*. *All* the others?

[*Exit* R., *closing door.*]

[PETER *moves quickly as though to open door and follow her, checks himself. He stands a moment, disheartened and afraid, walks* C., *looks around the room. He goes up to the writing-bureau as to an old friend, strokes it, looks at familiar chairs and the carpet. Standing back stage, he pulls out miniature case, opens it again absent-mindedly, snaps it shut in disappointment. Then he opens it*

again and gazes at the miniature. He looks at the door L. *through which* KATE *has gone out, then, slowly putting case back in his pocket, at the door* R. *Musing a moment, he turns again, sees himself in the mirror beside the fireplace, touches wig and his collar, passes his hand over his coat. He goes up to the tapestry suspended over console table where the picture hangs in 1928, and as he is gazing at it the chimes from a neighbouring church tower are heard.* PETER *hears them, walks to window* L. *slowly, opens curtains and raises the window. The chimes are louder.* PETER *looks out into Berkeley Square for some time motionless.*]

PETER *(The thrill of the adventure, and all his appreciation of what he sees in his voice).* Berkeley Square! . . . I thought it would look like this!

[*The chimes continue to play. The Curtain falls slowly.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

[*Late at night. The room in the Past, brilliantly lit by the candles. A string orchestra is playing music in the drawing-room,* L., *and the double-doors are open. An easel, bearing a canvas, face to wall, is propped in the corner between the writing-bureau and the rear wall. Some of the furniture has been rearranged. The settee has been pushed back and to the right centre; the tea-table, folded again, stands against L. end of settee, and the stool that was before the writing-bureau is placed to* L. *of settee at such an angle that two people sitting on settee and stool respectively appear in profile to audience. The armchair now stands before the left window, and the pair of walnut chairs are down stage,* L. *at right angles to each other, as though placed in position by two people who had been talking. The fire stool and the cabriole table have been removed.*]

[Miss Barrymore *and* Major Clinton, *who wears uniform, enter* L.]

Clinton. I trust that dancing has given you an appetite, Miss Susan.

Miss Barrymore. Perhaps a glass of sherry and a biscuit—

CLINTON. There's a very banquet spread below to-night; indeed, a novelty in *this* house.

MISS BARRYMORE. The cousin from the Colonies will pay. Ah, Major Clinton, *you* can tell us how much money he *really* has. Some say, twenty-five thousand a year!

CLINTON. I'll wager there can be no such fortune in the whole of Yankeedoodledom.

MISS BARRYMORE. Scoff as you will, Kate Pettigrew has made a splendid catch.

CLINTON *(Looks through door* L.*)* She might have fared worse. Have you noticed her younger sister? 'Tis pity she's so odd and distant.

MISS BARRYMORE. The Pettigrew Cinderella!

CLINTON *(As they go out* R.*)*. Cinderella at the ball, to-night! She's dancing with the fairy prince!

[LADY ANNE *enters from the drawing-room, talking to the* DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, *twenty-seven years old, beautiful and distinguished.*]

LADY ANNE *(Agitated)*. 'Tis full twenty minutes, Duchess, since I sent my son down to entice His Royal Highness up-stairs.

DUCHESS *(Fanning herself)*. Compose yourself, Lady Anne, these fat German princelings poison any entertainment. Be content with the honour of his presence among your bottles.

LADY ANNE. His presence anywhere is small honour beside that of the Duchess of Devonshire.

DUCHESS. Who would not come, my dear, to meet

your dazzling Yankee? His success to-night will be the talk of the town to-morrow.

LADY ANNE *(Delighted)*. Oh, Duchess!

DUCHESS. His manner, his voice, his wit, have captivated the least impressionable of our sex, and disarmed the most critical of his own. Or so I am informed. I would appraise for myself this odd *Je ne sais quoi*—

LADY ANNE. Oh, Duchess, our cousin is *not* odd!

DUCHESS. I hear what I hear. I *also* hear that your Kate has not danced so much as once with her Peter. They might be already married.

LADY ANNE *(Flustered)*. Indeed no, madam, they *dote* upon one another.

DUCHESS *(Laughing)*. Now pray remember, you have promised me a tête-à-tête with your cousin.

[*Enter* TOM R. *in conversation with* LORD STANLEY, *Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, a man of about fifty, who wears an order.*]

TOM. He drank "vun more," and then "anuzzer" swamped him.

STANLEY. I heard the Royal snore. But let sleeping princes lie, Pettigrew, and contrive for me a word with Mr. Standish.

TOM *(As they cross stage)*. If the women will let you get near him.

DUCHESS. Ah, Lord Stanley! Why do you never come to my Thursdays?

[STANLEY *and* TOM *bow.*]

[STANLEY *and* DUCHESS *go out* L.]

STANLEY. The outbreak of peace, my dear Duchess, has redoubled our labours at the Foreign Office.

LADY ANNE *(To* TOM*)*. Why have you not brought up the Duke as I bade you?

TOM. Would you have me carry him up, ma'am? He's snoring by the punch bowl.

LADY ANNE. Then, Thomas, someone *must* wake him.

TOM *(Shocked)*. What, ma'am? Shake a prince of the blood by the collar?

LADY ANNE *(Agitated)*. The Duke does not so much as come up the stairs to greet his hostess; 'tis noticed how Kate dances with every Tom, Dick and Harry but not with Peter; Helen will not be commonly civil to Mr. Throstle. Oh, I am distracted! *(Looks out door* L.*)* There's Miss Sinclair; ask her for a dance.

TOM. She's an heiress; she'll not look at me.

[THROSTLE *enters* L., *comes to* LADY ANNE, *before settee, points* L., *as* TOM *goes out* L.]

LADY ANNE. Surely, sir, you would have Helen be civil to her cousin?

THROSTLE. Any woman here would gladly relieve her of that task. Excepting Miss Pettigrew, who seems to avoid him.

LADY ANNE *(Disturbed)*. Nonsense, Kate is fulfilling her social duties. And if Helen is coy and shy, 'tis merely that she would tease you, dear sir. But I will speak to her.

[LADY ANNE *goes off* L.]

[*Enter* TOM L.]

TOM *(Walking up to* THROSTLE, *grumbling).* Did you see that, Throstle? Insolent Scotch puppy! But 'tis all one, for I could never bring myself to bed with that Sinclair filly, had she twice five thousand a year. *(Points* L.*)* My God, Throstle, look at him! Now the dance has stopped they all crowd round him—a levee, by God, a levee!

THROSTLE. Mr. Standish, sir, is a man of rare parts.

TOM. Too rare, by half. 'Tis no small honour for a Yankee to enter White's Club. He patronizes the bucks, sir. Told me the best quality in England were vulgar, brutal and dirty. He turned his back on the Prince of Wales! Thank God 'twas thought an accident!

THROSTLE. Why did he do so?

TOM. Because His Highness blew his nose with his fingers.

THROSTLE. Sir, the first gentleman of Europe, in his cups, is something coarse.

TOM. So, but he's the Prince!

THROSTLE. How the man bewilders me! His strange zest for things we despise, his aversions! They are pulling down some houses built in the dark ages on the old London wall near Moorgate—Mr. Standish would have them preserved! I informed him these are eyesores, since the taste of our ancestors was in all respects barbarous. He was angry, he said, "How the Future will curse you"!

[TOM *yawns.*]

"Whatever the taste of the Future," I replied, "'twill not be for the works of our half-savage forbears." A neat retort, I think?

TOM. We make him pay for his airs—at the gaming tables!

THROSTLE. And his ignorance of all the petty details of everyday life, and his nice disgust with so many of them!

TOM. Disgust! The young rebel!

THROSTLE. We affect him as a tribe of barbarians would affect us. Yet he's an American, a Colonial—'tis the most absurd paradox.

TOM. The most absurd impudence. And what d'you make of his curious—you take my meaning.

THROSTLE *(Disturbed, taking snuff)*. Sir, we are living in the eighteenth century!

TOM. I don't mind the things that make *your* flesh creep. But his damned superiority! Every morning two maids have to carry buckets of hot water up three pairs of stairs for Master Colonial to wash himself.

THROSTLE. Wash himself all over?

TOM. Every morning.

THROSTLE *(Wonderingly)*. Washes himself all over, every morning!

[KATE *and* LADY ANNE *enter* L. MAJOR CLINTON *enters* R. TOM *and* THROSTLE *turn up to window* R.]

LADY ANNE. Kate, this is Peter's dear friend, Major Clinton; Mr. Throstle, Major Clinton.

[KATE *curtseys,* CLINTON *bows,* KATE *comes to him at settee as he exchanges bows with* THROSTLE.]

CLINTON. All my congratulations, Miss Pettigrew. You have monopolised Standish so that I have seen nothing of him since we landed.

[KATE *and* CLINTON *sit on settee.* TOM *comes behind settee as he speaks.*]

TOM. You haven't heard this one, ma'am, nor you, Kate. Yesterday, after dinner at White's, he said he couldn't afford to lose a hundred and twelve guineas at a sitting. He'd never lost more than fifty! Last night three of us sat down at écarté, and when the reckoning came—zounds, it gave me a turn!

KATE. He'd lost the hundred and twelve guineas.

TOM. How did you guess? Exactly a hundred and twelve! And he paid us off with a damned sheepish smile at me, as if to say he was sorry he'd mentioned it *before* it happened.

LADY ANNE *(Irritated).* A truce to these childish riddles and puzzles.

CLINTON. You appear distressed, Miss Pettigrew. 'Twas but a prank; he seems to be playing some singular charade here in London.

TOM *(Mockingly).* A woman may well mislike to live with a man who knows what she's going to do the day after to-morrow, eh, Kate?

LADY ANNE *(Indignantly).* Thomas! *(Motions him to door* R.*)*

[*Exit* TOM.]

Come, Mr. Throstle.

[*Goes to fireplace with* THROSTLE.]

CLINTON *(To* KATE*)*. Standish has made a model of an engine that he says will drive looms by water power. He will transform England, if this be true.

[*Enter* PETER *with* LORD STANLEY. *As* STANLEY *talks they walk* L. C. *and stop,* KATE *and* CLINTON *listening.*]

STANLEY. Well, well, sir, I trust you can sympathise with the feelings of Englishmen who have been obliged to sign away a continent.

PETER. Do not grudge us our poor stretches of wilderness, my lord, you upon whose Empire the sun never sets!

STANLEY *(Greatly impressed)*. Sir, that is the most magnificent compliment ever paid to Great Britain!

PETER. It's not a bad phrase, is it? Though it might sound hackneyed if you'd heard it a hundred times before.

[*Exeunt* LADY ANNE *and* THROSTLE, L.]

STANLEY. Were it not your own, sir, we should all have heard it before. After all, why did we quarrel? About tea! We would have given up the tax to end the fighting—I cannot understand why you went on with the war.

PETER *(At a loss for a moment)*. Why, my lord, to make the world safe for democracy! *(Walks over to* KATE.*)*

[*Exit* STANLEY, L.]

[CLINTON *rises, steps back* R. *of settee.*]

We haven't danced yet, Kate; do you think you could bear with my clumsy steps?

CLINTON *(Hearty, but astonished)*. What, no word for me?

[PETER *looks at him blankly.*]

KATE. Surely, Peter, you remember Major Clinton?

PETER. Oh, of course.

CLINTON. Another of his jests. My friend of twenty-seven days in the *General Wolfe* pretends he doesn't know me!

PETER *(After embarrassed pause)*. When you put off your service uniform and dress like a peacock your own mother wouldn't know you, Clinton. You don't seem the same man!

CLINTON *(Gaping)*. You took the very words out of my mouth. *You* don't seem the same man, on shore.

PETER. I've been getting my land legs.

[PETER *steps to* KATE, *offers his arm. She rises as though to take it, then impulsively turns to* CLINTON, *saying*]

KATE. Forgive me, Peter, I promised this dance.

[CLINTON *looks at her astonished, then offers his arm and they go off* L., PETER, *much disturbed, standing before settee staring after them.*]

[LADY ANNE *appears in doorway* L., *with the* DUCHESS.]

LADY ANNE *(Calls.)* Peter!

[PETER *crosses to them.*]

The Duchess of Devonshire, Mr. Peter Standish.

[*Exit* Lady Anne, L.]

[Peter *bows;* Duchess *curtseys; she turns as if to go into drawing-room.*]

Peter. Ah, Duchess, I have disgraced myself. And I had three lessons!

[*She laughs, turns from door. They walk* R. *as she says chaffingly*]

Duchess. What was it you said about your American "steps"?

Peter. Oh, we have forgotten your polite measure; *our* dances are modelled on those of the—Red Indians.

Duchess. If you are to take my scalp it must be by your wit, which they say is better than your dancing. I am told, sir, that you seem to regard this country as a museum, and ourselves as specimens in glass cases. *(Sits on settee.)*

Peter. Oh, I cannot leave you with that absurd impression.

Duchess. Do your best to make another, then. But, please, no politics; I should be no match for you there; you have overwhelmed Lord Stanley.

Peter. Upon one theme, in *your* company, I might do justice to what Lady Anne expects of me.

Duchess. Your tone of voice identifies the theme! If we are to speak of sentiment, let me congratulate you. Miss Pettigrew will make you a devoted wife.

Peter. There is nothing in the world like the devotion of a married woman. It's a thing no married man knows anything about.

DUCHESS. What! A cynic about marriage before you have reached the altar?

PETER. What is a cynic, Duchess?

DUCHESS. One who sneers at love, at romance.

PETER. Yes; one who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing! But we should face the facts; *(Sits on stool.)* in love one first deceives oneself and then others—and that is what is called romance.

DUCHESS. Sir, such views of romance are commonly entertained by that most ignoble work of God, a faithless husband.

PETER. Fidelity is a strange thing! When we are young we try to be faithful, and cannot; when we are old we try to be faithless—

DUCHESS *(Delighted)*. And cannot! Oh, a delightful aphorism, sir! Your American pyrotechnics make me feel as stupid as a schoolgirl at her first ball. I can scarcely believe that I am—well, who I am—

PETER *(Up)*. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire!

DUCHESS. You roll it out as though you were announcing me at Court.

PETER *(With real but wholly impersonal enthusiasm)*. All the charm of the period seems to centre in that name!

DUCHESS. Flatterer! Admit that in America you had never heard of me!

PETER. What barbarian has not heard of the Fifth Duchess? *(Sits on stool.)* Your name in English social history is the finest flower of the age of elegance. We

know your face from—*(Anxiously)* Gainsborough *has* painted you, hasn't he?

[*She nods.*]

All the legend and beauty of the age cling about you. All one's dreams of the time have you for their central figure—your receptions, those dinners at Devonshire House—as powerful in politics as irresistible in love, what can the eighteenth century offer that— *(Breaks off, alarmed, continues self-consciously)* that can compare with—

DUCHESS. You speak of me so strangely. *(With a little laugh).* I find your overwhelming compliments—a little disturbing. You're talking about me as we two might talk about Madame de Maintenon. In the past tense!

PETER. Oh, *no,* Duchess, I never once used the past tense! *(Rises.)*

DUCHESS. You have been *thinking* of me in the past tense. *(She rises.)* Now I know what it is! You've been talking about me—as though—*(She steps back)* as though I were already dead!

PETER *(Discouraged).* And I tried so hard to make an impression.

DUCHESS *(Controlling herself and smiling).* Sir, you *have* made an—indescribable impression.

[*The* DUCHESS *curtseys, turns, exit* R.]

[THROSTLE *enters* L. *and crosses to* PETER.]

THROSTLE. Sir, my compliments upon your success to-night.

PETER. My success with the Duchess has been devastating. Is Major Clinton in there?

THROSTLE *(Takes step back, looking* L.*)*. He's dancing again with Miss Pettigrew.

PETER. Oh, damn the meddler! I wish they'd order him abroad again.

THROSTLE. Sir, you appear distressed. Ah, believe me, I've known Miss Pettigrew these five years; 'tis but a mood.

PETER. Your assurance is most comforting.

THROSTLE. And I entirely understand about Miss Helen.

PETER. What do you mean?

THROSTLE. Merely that I take no exception to your marked attentions to the lady to whom I offer the devotion of a lifetime.

PETER *(Angry)*. Come, Throstle, you're not fifty. I advise you not to offer any young girl the devotion of a lifetime until you're over seventy.

THROSTLE *(Paling)*. Your self-assurance, sir, is magnificent. Are you so confident that Miss Pettigrew is not almost of a mind to break with you?

PETER *(Laughing, with a touch of nervous hysteria)*. Kate, break with me! *(Rises.)* Listen, Throstle! We're going to get married and have three children—one of them dies of smallpox at the age of seven and is buried in St. Mark's Churchyard! That's absurd, isn't it? But you believe it, don't you?

THROSTLE *(Keeps composure with difficulty.)* Since

you can read Miss Pettigrew's future, perhaps you'll inform me as to Miss Helen's?

PETER *(Staggered).* Helen's future. No, I don't know that! *(With forced jocularity).* Look here, Throstle, can't you take a joke? I don't know any more about the future than you do.

THROSTLE *(Takes snuff, turns away.)* My *reason,* sir, tells me as much.

[TOM *enters* R.]

TOM *(At door).* Gad's life, Throstle, he's still asleep!

PETER. Who's asleep?

TOM. His Royal Highness!

PETER. Why not let him sleep?

THROSTLE. Ah, you wouldn't know, sir; etiquette permits no guest to leave any assembly before Royalty.

PETER *(Laughs.)* Then this ball will have to go on all night?

TOM. 'Tis no laughing matter, sir.

[PETER *walks back to portrait, looks at it, looks out of* R. *window.* CLINTON *enters* L., *talking to* STANLEY. *They turn to fireplace.*]

CLINTON. Gad, sir, as I tried to force myself through the press, I saw a fellow running away with a piece of charred bone.

THROSTLE *(Walks up to them.)* Charred bone?

CLINTON. Did any of you see that woman burned before Newgate this morning?

PETER *(Startled, comes down stage.)* What woman burned?

CLINTON. One Phoebe Harris, for coining. There's not been such a crush for years—I paid three guineas for a seat in a window.

THROSTLE *(With a faint sneer)*. Those who fancy the odour of burning flesh may observe the roasting of an ox in the Smithfields Market any morning, gratis.

PETER *(Exploding)*. You paid three guineas for a seat in a window to see a woman burned alive? God, and that can happen in London?

TOM. They strangle 'em before they put the fire to the wood.

PETER *(To Clinton)*. I hope you enjoyed the spectacle! Did you take your mother and sisters?

TOM *(Shocked)*. Sir, women of quality do not attend executions.

CLINTON *(With faint sneer)*. Americans appear squeamish people—when they're not at home —

THROSTLE *(Interrupting tactfully, to* PETER*)*. I trust, sir, our great lexicographer did not disappoint you, when you called upon him this afternoon?

CLINTON *(To* PETER*)*. I saw Dr. Johnson this morning, at the spectacle which so offends you.

PETER. So *he* was there too, was he? God!

TOM. What did the old bear say to you?

PETER. Oh, he thundered out a few platitudes. Really, his friends ought to stop him from dribbling food and snuff all over his waistcoat. And he'd be none the worse for a bath.

TOM. Bath! You and your everlasting baths!

PETER. Bathing hasn't always been an eccentricity—you admire the Romans; the Romans bathed.

THROSTLE. Only excessively, sir, when they became degenerate. The virile fathers of the Republic—

PETER *(Interrupting impatiently)*. Were as dirty as you are? I suppose you're right.

TOM. 'Struth, sir, you speak of the best of us here as no better than a litter of lousy Irishmen.

CLINTON. What in the devil's name is all this about baths? You took but one bath in the *General Wolfe,* and you talked about that for a week beforehand.

PETER *(At fault for a moment)*. I can't stand salt water.

[*Walks towards window* R., *looks at portrait, turns and comes front, meeting* HELEN *as she enters* R.]

CLINTON *(As they move to door* L., THROSTLE *behind* TOM *and* CLINTON*)*. What *have* you done to him here?

TOM. There's no fine lady so finicky as this Colonial. You didn't tell me he was like this, Clinton!

CLINTON *(Explosively)*. Gad, sir, he wasn't. London has made another man of him. It is altogether incredible!

[TOM *and* CLINTON *exeunt, talking.*]

[THROSTLE *turns at the door and watches* PETER *and* HELEN. LORD STANLEY *appears at door* L. *and talks to* THROSTLE.]

PETER *(Standing with* HELEN *before settee)*. He's been annoying you again. If only I could *do* something about it.

HELEN. But you do *do* something, just by feeling as you do.

[*Dance music starts.*]

Are we going to dance again? All the other women will be so jealous!

[DUCHESS *enters* R., *crossing to* STANLEY.]

PETER. The Duchess tells me I dance so badly.

HELEN. *I* don't think so, and you learned *so* quickly.

DUCHESS. I'm bored beyond all endurance, Stanley, and I've sent for my carriage.

[*Exit* THROSTLE L.]

STANLEY. But His Highness!

DUCHESS. Oh, I've no desire to make scandal by leaving before Royalty, so there's naught for it but to wake up the drunken old pig and get him out of the house. Come, lend me your countenance!

[*The* DUCHESS *exits* R., *ignoring* PETER *and* HELEN, *followed by* LORD STANLEY.]

HELEN. What *have* you been saying to the Duchess, Peter? She's been repeating such wicked, hard, cruel things downstairs—

PETER. Come and talk to me.

[HELEN *sits on settee.*]

Your mother begged me to impress the Duchess—*(Sitting on stool)*—so I dazzled her with some cheap epigrams made up by a fellow named Oscar Wilde.

HELEN. A friend of yours in New York?

PETER. Oh, no. He's dead. At least—well, never mind, it's rather complicated.

HELEN. You did indeed dazzle the Duchess, Peter.

But somehow you seem to have made her almost afraid of you, too!

PETER. I know. They all like me at first. But then I say something—wrong. I see it in their eyes. *(Intensely).* Are you afraid of me?

HELEN. I couldn't be afraid of somebody I'm sorry for.

PETER. Why are you sorry for me?

HELEN. Oh, because I think you're unhappy with us, though you're so brave, and you try to hide it. You feel so strange here—

PETER. Yes, I do.

HELEN. I can't imagine what America's like. It's so far away. But I suppose everything's so different. And the people, too.

PETER. Yes, that's it. Everything's different.

HELEN. And as for what worries you so, people being afraid of you I mean, that's only—only—

PETER. Only what?

HELEN. You know, Peter. It's because you look through us; you seem to know what we think, even what we're going to do next. *(Slowly).* I don't understand you. And I wish I could help you.

PETER. Oh, but you do! Just by your sympathy, even though you can't know how much I need it. The days are all right. I go about your old London—that's the most wonderful experience that ever came to a living man! But when I lie in bed and think! It all seems nightmare, until I remember you. You're not like the others; you're—real— *(Seizes her hand.)*

HELEN *(Withdrawing hand)*. I am Kate's sister!

PETER *(Humbly)*. Forgive me.

[LORD STANLEY *enters* R. *and crosses the stage hurriedly; as he goes out* L., *the voices of the* DUKE *and* DUCHESS *are heard.* PETER *and* HELEN *rise as they enter* R. *The Duke is elderly, corpulent, many-chinned, amiable. He wears the garter ribbon and star.*]

DUKE *(Laughing)*. The Duke of Gumberland must not be known as the Duke of Slumberland.

[LADY ANNE *enters hurriedly* L. *immediately followed by* LORD STANLEY. DUKE *and* DUCHESS *stop.*]

Zo; goot efening, Laty Anne.

LADY ANNE *(Curtseys.)* Your Royal Highness confers a great honour upon us.

[*Enter* L. KATE, CLINTON, THROSTLE, TOM, *gradually spreading out in a semicircle,* TOM *and* KATE L. *front.*]

DUKE. Your bunch iss fery goot. I haf stayed too long, pelow. I asg your pardon.

[LADY ANNE *curtseys again.*]

(Looking over company). I had heart mine old vrent Sir Joshua Reynolds vas here.

LADY ANNE *(Embarrassed)*. He was suddenly taken ill, Your Highness.

DUKE. Zo? I am sorry. And vere iss diss Amerigan gousin off whom I haf heart?

[LADY ANNE *gestures to* PETER, *who advances and bows.*]

LADY ANNE. Your Royal Highness, Mr. Peter Standish.

DUKE. You marry Miss Bettigrew, Mr. Standish?

PETER. Yes, Your Highness.

DUKE. Vere is she?

[LADY ANNE *moves* L. KATE *advances* L. *front.*]

LADY ANNE. My daughter, Your Royal Highness.

[KATE *curtseys.*]

DUKE. Zo! A fine bair of lofers. All my gongratulations. *(To* PETER*).* You haf gum a long joorney—Amerigans are great dravellers, you haf drabbled mooch, Mr. Standish?

PETER *(Casually).* Oh, from time to time.

[DUCHESS, *who has been standing to* R. *rear of* DUKE, C., *moves towards him and signals him a reminder with her fan.*]

DUKE *(Taking the hint, with a laugh).* Zo! Laty Anne, the Tuchess has tolt me it is fery late. I must dake my leaf.

[LADY ANNE *curtseys; the* DUKE *bows to her and to the others, turns, takes* PETER'S *arm.*]

You trink mooch in Ameriga—an Indian trink, I haf heart.

[*As the* DUKE *walks* PETER *out* L.]

PETER. Oh, you mean corn whisky, Your Highness. I found a bottle in my boxes, if you care to try it.

DUKE. And how did you get it t'rough the gustoms?

[*Exeunt* DUKE *and* PETER, L., LADY ANNE *immediately following, with all the others excepting* HELEN *and* KATE.]

[*As* KATE *turns to follow them,* HELEN *detains her.*]

HELEN. What is it, Kate! We always tell one another everything.

KATE. Helen dear, I don't know myself. I *meant* to dance with him—I was rude, ill-bred, anything you like—but I *couldn't.*

HELEN. He cannot understand why you slight him.

KATE. Then you were talking of me as you danced. *(Ironically).* I suppose he complained of my cruelty.

HELEN. He doesn't seem to take your behaviour—so seriously as I do.

KATE. Oh, so he doesn't take me seriously?

HELEN. He says there can't be any *real* disagreement, it isn't possible, because of course you *will* marry.

KATE. So; he thinks I *must* marry him, because we must have the money!

HELEN. Oh, Kate, you *know* such a thought could never cross his mind!

KATE. How do you know what thoughts cross his mind? About you, for instance? You're too good, Helen, to suspect anybody.

HELEN. Suspect Peter? Of what?

KATE. Oh, it doesn't matter.

HELEN *(Earnestly).* I want to compose this—

estrangement. I shall be miserable until everything is settled—and over.

KATE. You think I'm being very unfair. But there's such a thing as instinct, Helen.

HELEN. Oh, Kate, just because he sees and knows things, strangely—

KATE *(Interrupts.)* I can't help it, Helen, when I'm with him he makes me afraid. And when you're with him—I'm afraid for you!

[LADY ANNE *enters* L., *followed by* THROSTLE.]

LADY ANNE. The dear, dear Duchess! Had she not awakened him, he might have slept on for hours, everyone cooped up here, and our ball the laughing-stock of London!

THROSTLE *(With bow to* KATE). Miss Pettigrew, your lover has the town at his feet.

LADY ANNE. Oh, dear kind sir, your partiality—

THROSTLE. Has not obscured my judgment. *(With veiled irony).* None of your guests could credit our late Colonies with such a product.

[*Enter* TOM L., *yawning.*]

TOM. Look ye, Throstle, 'twas you took my cousin to Sir Joshua.

THROSTLE. I did, sir.

TOM. Sir Joshua sends Mr. Standish his compliments by me, and would have Mr. Standish destroy the portrait; he'll paint him no more!

LADY ANNE. What can Sir Joshua mean? Our cousin was to sit for him here to-morrow.

TOM. Then he may sit and admire himself, for there will be no painter.

KATE. I wonder why!

TOM. A hundred guineas they compounded for, and now the man throws picture and money too into Standish's face!

HELEN. Something has occurred between them.

THROSTLE. Some fault in the portrait has displeased the artist.

TOM. Fault in the portrait, eh?

[*As* THROSTLE *drags out easel from behind writing desk, and turns it around, showing half finished portrait,* TOM *continues.*]

(Mimicking REYNOLDS). "Something in his face eludes me. I thought, at first, it was irony. And yet, I fancy I know irony."

[KATE *rises, walks up behind* THROSTLE.]

THROSTLE. The work is in the artist's best manner.

KATE *(Gazing intently at picture).* I wonder why!

THROSTLE *(Taking snuff).* This is not like Sir Joshua.

KATE *(To* TOM*).* What exactly *did* Sir Joshua say?

TOM *(Mimicking).* "There is a quality in his every look, when I take up my brushes and fasten my eyes on his face, beyond all my experience of human nature."

KATE *(Slowly).* Painters have good eyes.

TOM. He had no mind to set his on Peter again.

KATE *(As to herself).* What *did* he see? *(Sits on stool by settee.)*

HELEN *(Rising and taking her arm)*. Sister, what is it?

LADY ANNE. Kate, Kate, what is amiss with you?

TOM. Vapours, vapours.

THROSTLE *(Disturbed)*. None of us understand him.

HELEN *(With spirit)*. I understand him—he's strange here, he feels just the same way, about us, that some of us do about him.

TOM. Why shouldn't he understand us? We are but ordinary people of quality.

KATE. God knows what he is.

LADY ANNE *(Angrily)*. Shame, shame, to speak so of your lover!

TOM. 'Tis no matter: perhaps Yankees get like that.

HELEN. Oh, Tom!

KATE. While you can pigeon him at White's you'll choke it down. But what of me?

LADY ANNE *(Rising)*. Kate! This is disgraceful!

KATE. So his bank account be sound, naught else matters to anyone—but me.

HELEN *(Distressed)*. Kate, Kate, don't you see that he's unhappy, too?

LADY ANNE *(Interrupts, to* KATE.*)* I forbid you to discuss your lover so.

[MAID *appears in door* L. *with candle-snuffer.*]

MAID. The musicians, my lady.

LADY ANNE *(Sweeping* L.). Tom, this is your mischief, with your tales to fright scullery maids!

[*Exit* LADY ANNE *with* MAID L., *giving directions.*]

KATE. How did he first get into this house?

TOM. I'll engage his legs carried him.

KATE. No one saw him below. You remember the rain. His boots were dry.

HELEN. Kate, dear, what *do* you mean?

KATE. I don't know what I mean. I think I'm going out of my senses.

HELEN. There's no reason to be afraid of him.

KATE. There's no reason to be afraid of a graveyard at midnight.

THROSTLE. And we're living in the eighteenth century!

(Takes snuff.) The age of reason, the age of Voltaire!

HELEN. What if he does see things—ahead of other people?

KATE *(More intensely)*. How did he get into this house?

HELEN. Oh, that again!

KATE. Nobody answers me.

HELEN. Kate, dearest, you *shall* be happy. Ask *him* about whatever troubles you!

KATE. I loved him, when he kissed me, that first day. And now, I'd rather die than ask him—anything!

[*Enter* PETER R., *stops at door.*]

PETER. Hello, what's the picture doing out here?

TOM. Sir Joshua would have you destroy his portrait.

THROSTLE. Sir, I propose to wait upon Sir Joshua to-morrow.

PETER *(Without surprise)*. Pray do not disturb yourself.

HELEN. You do not seem affronted, cousin.

PETER. He's entitled to paint whom he chooses.

KATE *(With an effort)*. You expected this?

PETER. Now that it's happened, I'm not surprised.

HELEN. 'Tis most uncivil of him, cousin.

PETER *(Vaguely, as though to himself, as he walks to easel, looks at portrait)*. The picture shall not be destroyed, and Sir Joshua will complete it.

TOM *(Languidly)*. Damnation, sir, men have sent their seconds for less than this!

LADY ANNE *(Enters* L.*)*. What! Still harping on that portrait! An old man's vagary, dear cousin; he'll no doubt send you his apologies, but, if not, Mr. Gainsborough will do you a better likeness. Thomas, put the ugly thing back where it came from!

TOM. Gad's life! All these frenzies about a lump of paint!

[TOM *lugs easel back and stows it behind writing-bureau.*]

LADY ANNE. Cousin, I've had no time for a morsel of supper, nor, I am sure, have you. Come below, 'tis late. Come, Mr. Throstle, come down with Helen!

[*Exit* THROSTLE *and* HELEN R. TOM *stops at door, looks from* KATE *to* PETER, *goes out, leaving door open.* PETER *goes to door, closes it, turns and faces* KATE.]

PETER. Kate, what's the matter? You've been avoiding me all the evening.

KATE. You have not been avoiding my sister.

PETER. That fellow Clinton's been upsetting you, hasn't he? I know what he told you.

KATE. Of course you know what he told me.

PETER. You see, Kate, I let him bore me on the boat with talk about machines and what he thinks is going to happen when we'll all be dead, and now, just because I'm myself again on shore, he—

KATE *(Interrupting)*. You know what he told me, you know what I am thinking now, you know what is going to happen next!

PETER *(Steps nearer.)* This is just a mood, Kate, it will pass.

[KATE *shudders, moves back.*]

There's nothing to be afraid of.

KATE. You attracted me; I thought I loved you.

PETER *(Definitively)*. You mustn't talk like that. We're going to be married!

KATE. So, I am to marry you, when I am put to it to force myself to remain alone with you!

PETER. Oh, this is that cursed picture—*(Moves up to easel.)*

KATE. Sir Joshua saw it! *(Moves towards door* R.*)*

PETER. Go to bed, Kate; you'll be yourself again in the morning.

KATE *(Turns at door.)* In the morning I shall post to Budleigh. I cannot stay in this house with you! *(Slips bracelet from wrist, extends it to him.)*

PETER *(Coming towards her)*. Kate, you mustn't break our engagement. *(Confidently)*. You *can't* do that!

KATE. Oh, I *can't* do that! How smugly you say it! So you think there are no limits to what a wizard can do with a woman? The women all press after you, don't they? But no woman wishes to dance with you twice —excepting Helen! I was never so afraid of anything in my life as I am of you *(Laughs wildly)*, and you think you can make me marry you, when I fear you as I fear the devil! *(Throws bracelet on floor.)*

PETER. Kate, this can't be!

KATE. I leave London in the morning, and I'll not return while you are in this house. I hope I may never set eyes on you again. In God's name, go back to—to America, if that's where you come from!

PETER. But things *can't* happen that *didn't* happen!

KATE. You speak words without sense. Only God and the devil know what they mean.

PETER. Oh, Kate, be reasonable. *(Picks up bracelet.)* Please. I only mean it's all arranged. I've come over to marry you—

KATE. Sir, your self-assurance is almost ridiculous.

PETER. Oh no, Kate, if you only knew, I haven't got any self-assurance at all. I wish I had. But we are going to be married, and have children, and live in this house. That *happens! (Pleadingly)*. You must feel that just as I do, don't you? It's *true!*

KATE. I've only this to say to you: I shall not return from Budleigh while you are in this house! *(Turns, to open door.)*

PETER *(Advancing towards her. Hysterically)*. No, Kate, don't go!

[*She turns to him.*]

We'll be happy together, and this marriage *has* to be. It *is! (Holding out bracelet). This, this* is impossible! You *can't* do that! It *didn't happen* that way!

KATE *(Advancing to him).* Whatever you mean, I've a woman's simple answer to your "can't do that." Since that first day I've been afraid to look in your eyes. But now, look in mine and tell me that you love me!

PETER *(Turns away, hand to head).* Kate, that will be all right; we'll be happy together.

[*She turns to door.*]

Kate! You won't go to Budleigh to-morrow, for when you meet me in the morning I shall be—different. I won't seem the same man. I may feel differently about Helen and Throstle—promise me now that you'll stand by Helen against them all, even against—me. Help her, Kate! She'll be alone, and she'll need your help—

KATE. She will indeed need help, if *you* take such an interest in her!

[LADY ANNE *enters* R. PETER *walks out* L.]

LADY ANNE. Kate, Kate, what is amiss?

KATE *(Curtseys.)* Ma'am, I post to Budleigh in the morning.

LADY ANNE. To Budleigh! I forbid you.

[*Enter* HELEN *and* THROSTLE R.]

KATE. Madam, I have always obeyed you; but I *cannot* stay in the same house with that man!

LADY ANNE. What rebellion is this? *(To the others).* She's mad. She won't have her cousin.

HELEN *(An involuntary ejaculation).* Oh!

[*She comes* R. *front and listens intently, motionless, during following.*]

LADY ANNE. Kate, what devil has got into you? Oh, Mr. Throstle! The catch of the year! The town mad about him! I shall never survive it!

THROSTLE. Dear Madam, this is no time—

[*He advances as if to kiss her hand in farewell, but she pays no attention to him.*]

LADY ANNE. Oh, oh, was ever such a perverse occurrence!

[*Enter* TOM R.).

TOM. Hell's fury, what's wrong here? What is it, ma'am?

[LADY ANNE *moans.*]

THROSTLE. Miss Pettigrew and Mr. Standish, sir—

TOM *(Interrupting, to* KATE). He's thrown you over? Now I must fight the scoundrel, though I know damned well he can kill me if he's half a mind to it.

KATE. He can kill you by looking at you if he's half a mind.

THROSTLE. Miss Pettigrew, sir, believes her cousin to be an arch-angel or demon—I'm not certain which!

LADY ANNE *(Moaning)*. She's out of her senses.

TOM. I'll have this out with him.

KATE *(Contemptuously)*. Don't get yourself killed on my account, I did it.

TOM. *You* did it?

THROSTLE. This is no time for the presence of the most devoted friend. *(Kisses* LADY ANNE'S *hand.)*

[KATE *and* HELEN *whisper.*]

LADY ANNE. Oh, sir, we know you are discretion itself.

THROSTLE. Count upon me always, honoured madam.

[*Advances to kiss the hands of* KATE *and* HELEN. *They ignore him, he bows to* TOM *and goes out* R.]

TOM. Now look'ee, Kate, you shall have him, if I've to post the banns myself!

LADY ANNE. Tom, leave this to me! Helen, Kate, go to your beds.

[HELEN *and* KATE *go out* R.]

TOM. This must not be! Fifteen thousand in settlement!

LADY ANNE. All my pains for nothing, and here's an end.

TOM. Hell and damnation!

LADY ANNE *(After long pause, significantly). Helen* shall compose him, in the morning.

TOM *(Comprehending).* Helen!

LADY ANNE. And why not, pray?

TOM. 'Tis all one, so the money be not lost. But what of Throstle?

LADY ANNE *(Contemptuously, as she goes out* R.). Oh, Throstle!

[MAID *enters* L. *carrying candle snuffer. She yawns, snuffs candle to* L. *of door; as she is snuffing candles between door and fireplace,* TOM *pinches her.*]

MAID. Oh, please, Mr. Tom.

TOM *(Stepping back and cocking head).* And how's Master Galton?

MAID *(Terrified).* Oh!

TOM. I told you I'd find out who he was! A fine handsome fellow in his scarlet plush and gold buttons! You're a lucky girl, Wilkins!

MAID *(Pleadingly).* Mr. Tom, you couldn't be so cruel—he'd never marry me if he knew.

TOM. Who's cruel? 'Tis you who are cruel. Come, a good kiss like old times, and you shall have a golden guinea for Tom Pettigrew's wedding gift.

[MAID *turns to him,* TOM *hugs her, whispers.*]

And remember, not a word from me if you're sensible!

[PETER *walks out of the now dark drawing-room, wholly abstracted.* TOM *hastily disengages, turns sheepishly to* PETER, *but* PETER *does not see him, walks mechanically to the fire stool and sits.*]

TOM. 'Tis late, I'm for bed.

[PETER *pays no attention,* TOM *turns with a shrug and goes out* R. *with a yawn which he stifles as he glances back uneasily at* PETER.]

[MAID *goes hesitatingly to fireplace to snuff candles in sconce to right of fireplace. She seems afraid to approach* PETER, *but* PETER *walks past her, not noticing her, but looking up at tapestry panel again as he passes it, goes to window* R. *and looks out.* MAID *snuffs sconce, then turns, moves hesitatingly*

R. *to snuff other sconces, but* PETER *turns from window and looks through her. She is afraid of him and she turns and goes out* L. *looking back at him over her shoulder from door.* PETER *walks to easel, looks at portrait again, then walks before tapestry panel, half raising his arms as though in invocation. Then he turns and walks, slowly and stiffly, as though dazed, towards door* R. *It opens suddenly and* HELEN *enters, flurried, as though she had been running. He stops. She closes door and stands with her back to it.*]

HELEN. Peter!

PETER *(At length, in dazed voice).* You know?

HELEN. We all know.

[*He turns, walks away.*]

Kate's not herself to-night. You mustn't think hardly of her, cousin.

PETER. *(Turns.)* Oh, it isn't Kate's fault.

HELEN. That's generous of you Peter. I want you to tell me what all this mystery means, so that I can go to Kate—

PETER. No, I can't, you'd be afraid of me, too.

HELEN *(With quiet dignity and force).* That's not true!

PETER. Oh, if I could only believe that!

HELEN *(Gently pressing).* How can you speak of things that haven't happened yet as though they had happened? How can you know things you couldn't

know? First, about my shawl. And since, so many things?

[*He sits on stool by settee,* HELEN *standing by him.*]

Tell me!

[*Pause.*]

PETER. The border line between what's just happened, and what's just going to, is—shadowy, for me. Things of to-morrow often seem as real as things of yesterday. And so, in fact, they are.

HELEN. Then it's true! You do see ahead!

PETER. You believe, when it's incredible, against nature?

HELEN. Can you see ahead just a day or two, or months and years?

PETER. Many months, and many years.

HELEN. I love life so! I want to see ahead, because I love it so.

PETER. So you're in love with the future, as I was in love with the—*(He breaks off.)* It's better just to dream about what's ahead—to dream *your* dreams—than really to know.

HELEN *(Sits on settee.)* But, Peter, I want to make Kate understand about these powers of yours; I want to make her see how proud and happy she should be, instead of afraid.

PETER. She'd only be still more afraid. It wouldn't be any use. But I could tell you about things that are going to happen, just for yourself, if you really want so much to know.

HELEN *(Eagerly)*. Oh, yes, Peter, please! Things you've seen!

PETER. Things I've seen. Where shall I begin? Helen, you see the candles there? Well, long after us, this room, Berkeley Square, all London outside, will be lit by one movement of a man's hand.

HELEN. By magic? But—what will it be like, Peter?

PETER *(Helplessly)*. I can't tell you; you wouldn't understand; there aren't any words that could make you understand.

HELEN *(Their eyes meet and she continues to look at him fixedly.)* No words. There aren't any words because these things come to your mind in visions, Peter, and I think I could see them, too—through your eyes. Will you let me try?

PETER. But that isn't possible!

HELEN. Let me look! *(Gazes intently into his eyes.)*

PETER. Helen! Your eyes burn mine!

HELEN *(In low voice)*. 'Tis this room. It blazes with your magic lights, Peter! There's your portrait, on the wall, finished! You said it would be.

PETER. The veil is thin, for you!

HELEN. A man and a girl. They are dressed—so queerly. The man turns to her, he kisses her. I can't see his face but he's like you, Peter.

PETER *(Wrenches head away.)* No, no!

HELEN. Yes, show me, I *will* see!

PETER. Not that, the wonders of the future—ah, *now* look! *(Turns head back to her.)*

HELEN *(Looking in his eyes again)*. Sunshine, white clouds, three great birds, bigger than a hundred eagles—

PETER. Machines, with men in them.

HELEN. And below them, water! The ocean! That great floating mountain there! A ship? No sails! No masts! Peter, 'tis on fire! And beyond—a great cluster of towers. They climb into the clouds. Oh, Peter, is it heaven?

PETER. Only a city across the sea.

HELEN. A fairy dream city. It fades. *(Sinking back)*. Is the future all poetry, beauty? They fly like birds, crush the ocean, their houses pierce the sky. They'll conquer evil. They'll be angels, not men.

PETER *(Murmurs ironically.)* "Angels, not men."

[PETER *turns his head as* HELEN *again peers into his eyes.*]

No, you'd see other pictures now, things that you mustn't see.

HELEN *(Grasps his shoulders.)* I *will* see!

PETER *(Moans, but turns his head to her.)* You cannot bear it!

HELEN. Monsters—no, men, in masks over their heads—a yellow mist around them; they fall, they twist in the mud—

PETER *(With great effort)*. If you must see, let it be by night!

HELEN. Lights, dancing, flashing everywhere! But this is most beautiful of all.

PETER. The fireworks of hell.

HELEN. Oh! A great flame opens like a flower. Petals like rainbows!

PETER. A dump of shells that blew a score of men to pieces.

HELEN *(Unheeding)*. Curving streams of fire—

PETER. Pumped out of hoses to shrivel men up like insects!

HELEN *(Shrinks back, covers face with hands.)* Oh!

PETER *(Leaping up and back)*. We should have stopped, with your fairy city!

HELEN. Devils, demons, not men! *(She rises, turns from him.)* 'Tis not true! God would never have put us here to suffer, for a race of fiends like that to come after us.

PETER *(Embraces her.)* Helen, dear Helen, what were we doing?

HELEN. The mystery, behind your eyes!

PETER. You saw the future there.

[*Pause.*]

HELEN. But there was something else, more wonderful than that!

[*They disengage; he turns away; she half turns away, turns to him again.*]

And now, I will go to Kate and tell her that I have shared your vision, and why it is that people are afraid—

PETER. No, you mustn't tell her; she won't be afraid to-morrow. Nobody will be afraid any more. I won't seem the same man.

HELEN *(Walks towards door* R., *then turns.)* But I

don't understand why I mustn't talk to Kate—we've always told each other everything, Peter.

PETER. You think she threw me over to-night just because she was afraid of me? It's more hopeless than that, Helen. She's found out that I don't love her.

HELEN *(After pause)*. But you want to marry her.

PETER. Don't let's talk about that. I had to go on with it, that was all.

HELEN. Then you don't love Kate any more than she loves you now, and it isn't about Kate you're unhappy, but because you feel lost here, and strange, and because people are afraid of you—

PETER. Yes, and as everything has closed in around me, your sympathy has kept me from going mad!

HELEN. You make me very happy.

PETER. You know how I feel, you must know, but try to believe, even though you can never understand why, that the beauty that is with us and about us now, though it's more lovely than all the real things that ever were, *isn't real,* Helen. It's only a mirage. It's like a vision of heaven, it couldn't exist in this world at all, or in any real world, it's—it's unnatural!

HELEN. Unnatural?

PETER. Yes, and impossible, *not real,* Helen. You must forget it all and forget me, for your own dear sake.

HELEN. You know I can't do that, Peter.

PETER *(In agony and remorse)*. Oh, what have I done?

HELEN *(Bewildered)*. Peter, you know the Future! Tell me ours!

PETER. Our Future! No, I don't know *that!* Oh, Helen, try to understand. I come to you from—somewhere else. Another world.

HELEN. I know. It's all so different here.

PETER. But I'm not—one of you!

HELEN. I've always felt that, Peter. Peter, it's something you've done that's like a wild beast in your mind. Whatever it is—if you'd murdered someone—*(A thought strikes her.)* Peter! What price have you paid for the splendour about you? You've not sold your soul to—if the Fiend comes for you, he can have me too!

PETER. No, my soul's not damned, not what you mean by damned. *(Embraces her.)* I love you. Oh God, help us both! I love you!

HELEN *(Quietly and proudly)*. I loved you before I ever saw you, in my first dream of you, coming with a candle, from somewhere far away, to meet me.

PETER. Oh, but, Helen, I'm not playing my part now; *(Breaks from her.)* I'm myself, you see. I'm *myself,* and I'm muddling everything up! This isn't possible, this isn't my world,—or yours. It isn't my life,—or yours!

HELEN. Then take me away with you, Peter.

PETER. I can't! I can't!

HELEN *(Runs to him, clings to him.)* Then don't leave me!

PETER. *I won't! (Looks wildly behind him to where the picture hangs in the modern scene.)* When I kissed

Kate, that was *his* kiss, to his betrothed! *(Straining her to him).* But there's *never been* a kiss like *this,* since the world began!

[*A long kiss.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Scene One

[*The room in the Past. Late afternoon—a week later. The scene is set as in Act I, Scenes 1 and 3.*]

[Maid *shows in* Throstle r., *curtseys and exits* r. *Enter* Lady Anne, l. Throstle *bows, she curtseys.*]

Throstle. Your faithful servant, madam.

Lady Anne *(Embarrassed)*. A pleasure, indeed a pleasure, dear Mr. Throstle!

[*During this* Tom *has entered* l. *He and* Throstle *bow,* Tom *strolls to fireplace, leans on elbow against it.*]

Tom *(Nonchalantly)*. 'Pon my oath, Throstle, you haven't been near us in a week.

Throstle. I have been with you—in thought.

Lady Anne. We had hoped, sir, that your visits, so welcome always, were not now to be discontinued.

Throstle. In the altered circumstances, you would say, Lady Anne?

Tom. Things do turn out in devilish queer fashions.

Lady Anne *(Acidly)*. I know of nothing, Thomas, that has turned out queerly, in this house.

Tom *(Smiling)*. Mr. Throstle would scarcely agree with you there, ma'am.

LADY ANNE *(Reprovingly)*. Thomas!

THROSTLE. Nevertheless, there can be no choice between my fifteen hundred, and your cousin's ten thousand a year.

TOM *(Approvingly)*. You know the world, sir!

THROSTLE. One corner of it, fairly well.

LADY ANNE. Dear, dear friend, such tact, such breeding . . . had it been *anyone* else *(Not looking at him)* . . . but indeed 'twas evident from the first that Helen and Mr. Standish were made for each other.

THROSTLE. I have come to lay at Miss Helen's feet the felicitations of a rejected suitor.

LADY ANNE *(Hurriedly; turning to him)*. Pray do not do that, sir!

THROSTLE. But, ma'am, I have ears, I have eyes, and so indeed have others. What motive can there be for reticence?

TOM. What indeed! Every tongue in London must be wagging, ma'am. Does he not avoid everyone since the ball, are they not seen together every day?

LADY ANNE *(Constrained again)*. When we have news, Mr. Throstle, you shall be the first to hear them.

THROSTLE. Am I then to understand that Mr. Standish has made as yet no formal application,—

[HELEN *enters* R., *followed by* PETER. PETER *is in riding costume, and carries a riding-crop. His face is paler and more drawn than in Act II; he seems to have aged, he is much more nervous.*]

Miss Helen, it has been a week since I have been able to ask after your health.

HELEN *(Abstractedly)*. Has it been so long, Mr. Throstle? Forgive me; I thank you.

THROSTLE *(To* PETER*)*. I trust, sir, that your first impressions of England have been confirmed by your—rides about our country-side?

PETER. I love England, sir.

THROSTLE. Such an unequivocal declaration warms one's heart. Some men are more backward in confessing their affections.

LADY ANNE *(Hastily, coming to him; with forced lightness)*. Dear Mr. Throstle, now do come into the drawing-room and tell me all the gossip. I always count on you for that!

[THROSTLE *bows to* HELEN *and* PETER, *turns after* LADY ANNE L.]

THROSTLE. All the gossip that I hear, ma'am, seems confined to one topic.

LADY ANNE *(As they go out* L.*)*. I've not stirred from the house these three days.

[PETER *walks to console table, puts down whip.* TOM *walks* L., *turns at door, looks from* PETER *to* HELEN, *laughs and raises his hand to* PETER *as though drinking to him. Exit.*]

PETER *(Comes down stage.)* I'd like to wring the little sneak's neck for him!

HELEN. But, Peter, we don't really care about what they say.

PETER. Of course we're always together, and Lady Anne keeps expecting me to say something—

HELEN *(A little strained)*. You *are* happy with me, Peter?

PETER *(Embracing her)*. Divinely happy! This morning, in those enchanted Richmond woods—

HELEN. The sun on the red leaves!

PETER. Helen, dearest, forgive me, I don't want to drag in everyday practical things into this dreamland we've been living in—

HELEN *(Pleadingly)*. Then don't, Peter! *(Walks to window* L., *looking out.)* There's a thrush by the fountain! Come out into the Square, we mustn't lose even the twilight of this day that was made just for us!

PETER. That Throstle—they're *all* talking about us, now! We can't go on like this. Why did you make me promise not to tell them we love each other?

HELEN. You try to keep away from them all. And they know you do, Peter. *(She comes down* C. *from window.)*

PETER. Of course I try to keep away from them—to be with you. That's natural, isn't it?

HELEN *(They sit on settee.)* When you *do* have to talk to them, you say things you shouldn't. Sometimes I'm afraid you'll even tell them—tell them the truth.

PETER. Oh, Helen, don't bring back the thoughts that are nightmare! Do you think I'm going out of my head? *(With nervous laugh)*. If I did tell them, it would certainly send *them* out of theirs!

HELEN *(Sadly)*. Can't you think of it as I do, as a

fairy story and not as a nightmare? Don't you see the difference? They're both impossible, but fairy stories are beautiful and nightmares are ugly.

PETER. What is the end of every fairy tale?

HELEN *(Murmurs.)* And so they lived happily, ever afterwards.

PETER. Then make this a *true* fairy story! Let me go to Lady Anne!

HELEN. How can I, when even though you love me, your mind and body ache to get back?

PETER. They don't, Helen, they don't; I adore the peace of old things, the quiet and the charm—

HELEN. You can't deceive me. 'Tis true that you were fond of what's left in your world of our poor little London that is here now. But I feel the loathing and contempt in your heart, and the fear! Your whole soul yearns for your own life.

PETER. Helen, how can it matter to me where I am or what world I'm in, if I have you with me?

HELEN. You're like an angel who should put off his wings and give up his heaven to live on earth with a girl who loves him.

PETER. Heaven! I thought of it when I lived in it as all raw nerves and clatter and ugliness!

HELEN. But you don't think that now as you look back on it, Peter! Oh, I've watched you, and you've let things slip! When you were talking of the thrill of speed you said we all live here with chains on our feet —and you said, if I thought your city was Paradise by day, I ought to see it in the winter evenings, when

the lights come on—and even in the woods at Richmond, you said you wished you had a ci-ga-rette!

PETER. Oh, curse cigarettes! Give me yourself, and I can forget it all and be happy in our love.

HELEN *(Suddenly)*. Peter, did you sleep last night?

PETER *(Taken aback)*. Do people really *sleep,* in the eighteenth century?

HELEN *(Distressed)*. Oh, my love, I knew it!

PETER. Why, that's nothing at all, Helen. I shall be all right when I really have *you!*

HELEN *(Sadly, doubtfully, murmurs.)* When you have me.

PETER. My darling—the way you say that, as though it could never happen!—you make me afraid—tell me that you never think of this as a love of ghost for ghost! Even though you love me so, don't you think of me sometimes as a phantom who hasn't even been born yet, as a shadow?

HELEN *(Kisses him passionately.)* Dear shadow!

PETER. Your kisses! You seem all spirit and white fire, not flesh and blood at all, excepting when you kiss me, and then I know that you want me as I want you, and that whatever else of terror and mystery there may be, our love is the old everlasting love of man and girl—

HELEN. Something more. *(Rises, turns from him.)* Perhaps something less.

PETER *(Rises.)* Not something less! We're going to live out our lives here together!

HELEN *(Turns to him, embraces him.)* I want to believe it, Peter! Make me believe it!

PETER. I will, Helen; I can and I will! I'll go to Lady Anne right away. *(Noise of coach).* That's what I need: to feel that I've taken the plunge, that it's settled! And you want me, you need me too! Why else has this wonder happened?

[*Door opens* L. *They disengage.* TOM *enters, looks from one to the other uneasily.*]

TOM. Too occupied to hear it, I suppose?

PETER. What do you mean?

TOM. Oh, a coach has stopped at the door. Someone has got out, that's all.

HELEN. Kate!

TOM. Gad, a fellow can't tell you two anything you don't already know! I wish I had second sight! *(Seriously.)* Better go in there and let me talk to her. She'll need a little preparation, eh, cousin?

[PETER *and* HELEN *go out* L.]

[TOM *strolls to mirror, adjusts cravat, humming, "Let schoolmasters puzzle their brains." Enter* KATE R. *in travelling costume.* TOM *turns, affecting surprise.*]

TOM. Gad's life! You! Better be scared to death in town than bored to death in the country, eh, sister? You'd never believe the luck I've had, the week you've been at Budleigh!

KATE. I know what has happened.

TOM. Oh, indeed? News travels fast, it seems. You've not developed second sight, too, by any chance?

KATE. Where is Mr. Standish?

TOM. *Mr.* Standish, is it now? Now look'ee, sister!

I'd blame no woman for not having our Yankee mystery-monger. But, thank God, for all our sakes, there's someone who doesn't feel as you do, and now you're back you *must* be civil to him.

KATE. Where is he?

TOM. He's where and with whom he should be. *(Looks out of window* L. *and exclaims with surprise.)* Gad's life, now the cat's come home the mice have scampered off! So; he opens the gate! The fountain plays in the Square! 'A fine bair of lofers'!

[KATE *looks out of window* R., *turns, covers her face with hands.*]

Eh, what's wrong with you?

KATE. This shall never be!

TOM *(Angrily)*. Who says so?

KATE. I say so.

TOM. Hell and damnation! First you put aside the settlement and ten thousand a year yourself, now a week later you post to town to stop Helen from bringing it into the family!

[KATE *tugs bell-pull sharply; he follows her.*]

Now, Kate, no mischief! 'Tis no more your affair!

KATE. I came back to save her. I'd rather see Helen in her coffin than the wife of Peter Standish!

TOM. 's life, if you set her against him!

KATE. So, because you've had his money and can't pay if we break with him, you'd see your sister damned!

TOM *(Furious, but confused)*. See my sister damned! You're my sister, and I say damn you—for not minding your own business.

[*Enter* MAID R.]

KATE. Mr. Standish is walking in the Square with Miss Helen. Ask him to come here to me.

MAID. Yes, madam.

[*Exit* R.]

TOM *(With ugly laugh)*. We'll see what mother has to say to your pretty scheme!

KATE. You think you're but selling Helen for money, as girls are sold every day.

TOM. Sell, indeed! The girl dotes on him.

KATE. Then she's bewitched, as I was!

TOM. As you *are,* you mean! There's to be no meddling, you hear me, no meddling!

[*Enter* LADY ANNE, L. *followed by* THROSTLE.]

LADY ANNE. What, Kate, you here!

[KATE *curtseys,* THROSTLE *bows.* LADY ANNE *turns to* THROSTLE, *expecting him to take his leave.*]

Mr. Throstle—

KATE. Mr. Throstle, don't go—help me to save her!

LADY ANNE *(Angrily, to* KATE*)*. What, have you not repented of your folly?

TOM *(Comes to* LADY ANNE.*)* No, and she would commit worse folly. Won't have Peter herself, and now has him fetched here to tell him he shan't have Helen.

LADY ANNE *(To* THROSTLE*)*. Dear sir, pray return to us when we are not in turmoil.

[THROSTLE *bows uncertainly.*]

TOM *(Suspiciously, to* KATE*)*. Where did you hear all this?

KATE. Oh, Mr. Throstle, *you* understand—stay and help me!

THROSTLE. Madam, is ten thousand a year worth the loss of Miss Helen's happiness?

LADY ANNE. Eh, what's this, Mr. Throstle? Who speaks of loss of happiness?

TOM *(To* LADY ANNE*)*. He's a party to this; he's been writing to her about Helen!

LADY ANNE. Is this true, Mr. Throstle?

THROSTLE. Madam, Mr. Standish is no fit mate for any mortal woman.

KATE. You *know,* you *know!*

THROSTLE. God will not permit it.

LADY ANNE. What treachery is this, Mr. Throstle?

KATE *(Crying)*. I must open your eyes, ma'am. I came back to save her, and she's out there now, *(Gesture to window)*. with *that!* Oh, my poor sister! *(Sits on settee.)*

LADY ANNE *(Turning to* TOM*)*. Flight, and now conspiracy—my rebel daughter returns to ruin all our hopes, and all our prospects.

TOM *(In half whisper)*. Throstle is concerned in this, ma'am. Be high with her, pack her off again, or she'll bedevil everything.

LADY ANNE. Leave her to me, Thomas.

TOM. Ma'am, with this Yankee—my God, anything might happen. They must marry at once.

[THROSTLE *walks to window* L.]

LADY ANNE. Helen fobs me off with distant answers.

TOM. I'd another hundred out of him last night. He'd

not have lent me more, after Kate broke with him, had he not meant to have Helen. Press him, ma'am, press him!

LADY ANNE. Be calm, Thomas, this is in *my* hands. *(Advancing towards* KATE, *who rises).*
Kate, if you cannot master this strange perversity, you must return to Budleigh. *(Turns to* THROSTLE.*)* Sir, I beg you to carry your plots and stratagems elsewhere.

[THROSTLE *bows, walks* R. *rear.*]

KATE. This marriage must not be!

LADY ANNE. What, hussy—"must not be"?

TOM. Now you see, ma'am! *(Sits before desk.)*

LADY ANNE *(Walks up to* KATE *with dignity, before settee.)* You will beg my pardon, miss, for this unheard-of insolence.

KATE *(Stands her ground.)* I told you I'd not have him, did I not love him. I did love him; he cast his spell on me, but God took pity and saved me.

LADY ANNE. More of this and I will have physicians to you.

[*Enter* MAID R. *announcing.*]

MAID. Major Clinton.

[*Enter* CLINTON R. *Looks about him in surprise, bows. Exit* MAID.]

LADY ANNE *(Frigidly).* To what do we owe this wholly unexpected honour?

KATE. *I* asked him to come.

TOM. What's this, Clinton, are you in this damned conspiracy?

CLINTON. I know of no conspiracy, sir. Miss Petti-

grew called at my house and asked me to follow her here.

LADY ANNE. For what purpose did she ask you to come, sir?

CLINTON. Miss Pettigrew insisted. But she made no mention of a general company. I could scarcely disoblige a lady, but I am conscious 'tis an absurd errand.

LADY ANNE. This fooling grows tedious, sir. What is your errand?

[*Enter* PETER R.]

KATE. Major Clinton, will you be good enough to ask your questions now?

LADY ANNE. Questions, what questions?

PETER *(Walks up stage* R., *turns, looks about him like a man in a trap.)* Ah, so the questions seem to have been agreed between you.

CLINTON. If I might speak but a word alone with Mr. Standish, I could then reassure Miss Pettigrew—

TOM. Gad's bones! Reassure her of *what?*

CLINTON *(Much embarrassed).* Since I am forced to say it, that Mr. Standish is—that this gentleman is—my friend of the *General Wolfe.*

[LADY ANNE *and* TOM *leap up.*]

LADY ANNE. What lunacy is this?

PETER. It seems that my identity is challenged.

CLINTON. Not by me, sir, for all your strange behaviour since we landed.

LADY ANNE. You dare to come here, as the accomplice of this mad daughter of mine, to insult—

TOM *(Interrupts.)* Sir, you shall give *me* satisfaction, after Mr. Standish has called you to account!

CLINTON. If I'm to fight you, sir, you must invent another quarrel; I'll be no butt for the town wits.

LADY ANNE. You call yourself a gentleman—you wear the King's uniform—

CLINTON *(Interrupts.)* I'd rather face a Yankee battery than this hornet's nest—

PETER *(Coming down stage between* CLINTON *and* TOM. *With hysterical laugh).* Or is it a mare's nest?

KATE. Question him!

CLINTON *(To* PETER*).* I intended only to set her mind at rest, by which I thought to earn your thanks. Miss Pettigrew, I protest I've not earned this treatment.

KATE. You white livered coward!

LADY ANNE. Take yourself off, sir.

CLINTON. My most abject apologies, madam.

[CLINTON *bows.* TOM *opens door for him, closes it behind him,* PETER *laughing hysterically.*]

[THROSTLE *walks to window* R., *looks out.*]

KATE *(In front of settee).* Mr. Standish! When you came into this house, though the door was shut and locked, *did* you come from America?

LADY ANNE *(Turning on her, furiously).* To your room! To your room, I say!

KATE *(Walks up to* PETER.*)* I remain till I've had my answer. Sir, do you *really* come from America?

PETER *(Much upset by* KATE'S *direct attack).* I do. That, at least, is true!

KATE *(Laughing hysterically)*. I made a list of ten of his phrases—he said they were used in New York—on my way home I stopped in Grosvenor Square. Should not the American Minister, Mr. Adams, know what words are used in New York?

PETER. He's from Massachusetts.

KATE. I asked him. He had never heard one of the ten! So you see, those words are not used in America! They are not used in England! They are not used in this world! *(Violently)*. The devils use them, in hell!

TOM. Hark'ee, Kate, you mad wench! That Throstle skulking over there, who's as mad as you now, he spoke to Mr. Adams, and the Yankee Minister knew Peter in New York.

KATE. Peter Standish came from New York in the *General Wolfe*—his body stands there—*(To Peter)*. but what have you done with *him?*

LADY ANNE. Poor abused cousin!

KATE *(Turns on her.)* In the old days he'd have been burned, he'd have been burned at the stake!

PETER. Why not now? You burn people still—you burn women!

LADY ANNE. Physicians, straps, restraint, confinement!

PETER *(Suddenly beside himself)*. Yes, *and whips!* . . . Whip her, if she's crazy, flog her, as you flog lunatics at Bedlam, flog them in public, with a crowd of your gaping Londoners looking on—you savages!

KATE. You have stolen his body, but what have you done with his *soul*?

PETER *(Laughing hysterically, advancing on* KATE*)*.

"John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
His soul goes marching on!"

TOM *(Behind* PETER*)*. She's out of her head, never mind what she thinks about you!

PETER *(Turning on him quickly)*. And what do *you* think about me?

[TOM *steps back.*]

You daren't look me in the eyes, yet you'd marry me to your sister! D'you think I don't know why! You—a gentleman! Insolence, ignorance and dirt! Your sport, the cockpit and bearpit, gambling and obscenity, making a beast of yourself with drink and debauching servant girls! And you're no worse than the rest, no worse than your Prince—you *are* a typical English gentleman of your time—God! What a Time! You and your friends know it all, don't they, Throstle? So you despise your rude barbarian forbears, do you? Well, we who know better love them and despise you. No warmth in your blood, no soul in your art. God! What a Period! Dirt, disease cruelly, smells! a new fire of London, that's what's needed here, yes and a new plague too! God how the Eighteenth Century stinks! You, Kate, you may be a fool, but you're the best of the lot, for you're trying in your silly way to help Helen now, and I love you for it! *(Turns on* LADY ANNE.*)* Madam, I've seen you in Sheridan's plays, I've read you in Jane Austen's novels. You know what you want, and you plough straight ahead in the storm, over everything, through everything, like a tank, lumbering through the mud! *(Laughs wildly.)* You hear that, Kate? Like a tank, lumbering through the mud! That's your eleventh

strange word from the lexicon of Beelzebub. Go to the American Legation and ask Charles Francis Adams what "tank" means! No, it's not Charles Francis Adams who's Minister here now, it's his grandfather, John Adams, second President of the United States. Charles Francis Adams isn't born yet, he won't be Minister here until the Civil War in 1861. What's one blunder among so many? Peter Standish came from New York to Plymouth in the *General Wolfe,* did he? Peter Standish came from New York to Plymouth in the *Mauretania!* Shall I make a few more blunders for you to gibber at? *(To* KATE*).* Shall I drive you back to Budleigh in my car, fifty miles an hour? No, not on a broomstick! *(To* LADY ANNE*).* Shall I sell that portrait for you in America, madam, for thirty thousand pounds? *(Shouts as he rushes up to tapestry.)* The Americans buy all the Reynoldses!

[*Stops dead, arms outstretched, gazing up at tapestry. The others exchange glances.* LADY ANNE *steps forward as though to go to him, when he turns, shrinking back against the console table.*]

What do I care about you? You're all over and done with! *(Sidles along rear wall, afraid, grasping window curtains for support.)* You're all dead—you've all rotted in your graves—you're all ghosts, that's what you are—ghosts!

[*Exit* KATE L., *quickly followed by* LADY ANNE.]

TOM *(Runs after them.)* God, she's going to Helen!

THROSTLE. Sir, a word with you! You have won her

affections, as you could win those of any woman who did not fear you.

PETER. What the devil do you mean?

THROSTLE. Sir, do you even intend to make her your wife?

PETER. You dead and buried little pipsqueak,

[*Seizes whip from console table, advancing on* THROSTLE, *who turns, grabbing candlesticks from bureau.*]

you dare to soil with your dirty mind—

THROSTLE *(Turns as* PETER *raises whip, holding candlesticks in the form of the Cross).* Retro me, Sathanas!

THROSTLE

Adjuro ergo te, draco nequissime, in nomine agni immaculati. Adjuro ergo te, omnis immundissime spiritus, omne phantasma, omnis incursio satanae . . .

Exi ergo, impius, exi scelerate, exi cum omni fallacia tua, quia hominum templum suum esse voluit Deus. . . .

PETER

(Stops, whip poised in mid air, laughs hysterically, slings whip across room). Ha. Exorcism! Throstle casts out the devil! Banned by bell, book and candle! You've got *two* candles, but where's your book, where's your bell? Most irregular! *(Pauses,* THROSTLE'S *phrases are heard alone for a moment. More violently.)* So you send me back to hell where I came

Exi ergo, transgressor. Exi seductor, plene omnis doli et fallaciae, virtutis inimicus, innocentium prosecutor!

from, do you? I'm to vanish in a clap of thunder, am I? *(Stands on toes, fingers crooked, towering over* THROSTLE *like Mephisto.)* Smell the brimstone, Throstle! Can't you smell the brimstone? Shall I take off my shoe and show you the cloven hoof? I'll set ten devils on you, damn your soul!

[*During latter part of scene* THROSTLE *has retreated few steps towards door* R. PETER *wrenches away candlesticks, throws them to floor behind settee.* THROSTLE, *with a hoarse scream, pulls door open, exit.*]

[PETER *turns, walks few steps almost to small table, then, head in hand, staggers to window* R., *looks out.*]

PETER *(After pause. Quietly, voice shaking.)* And I was in love with the Past! *(Turns, walks to settee.)* Is that a crime, is it as bad as murder? It must be, for see what my sentence is—imprisonment for life, for life, for life, *(Sinks on settee, buries head in hands.)*—in this filthy little pigsty of a world!

[*After pause, enter* HELEN L. *She sees* PETER'S *back, stops.*]

HELEN. Peter! Is it you?

[*He rises, back to her.*]

Say you are not the other!

[PETER *turns to her; she runs to him; they embrace before settee.*]

I was afraid *he* had come.

PETER. He isn't here, he can't be; it takes us both to do it! *(Reproachfully).* So you thought I might have *sneaked* back!

HELEN. No, no!

PETER. Then you've heard, you thought I'd do it while I was out of my head. Even if I *were* mad, I'd never leave you! I told them it's for life,—for life! Let him stay there and be damned. I've made my choice.

HELEN. 'Tis beyond your strength.

PETER. You do not know my strength. Oh, Helen, Kate *knows,* and Throstle—

HELEN. I know, Peter, they baited you. You told them how you hate their world, my world—

PETER. I was blaspheming, since you are part of it.

HELEN. You told them how you feel buried alive—among the dead. And now, you can never see them again.

PETER. No, never again! We'll go away together! To America!

HELEN. People would hate and fear you, anywhere.

PETER. Why should they hate me?

HELEN. They hate what they fear, just as you fear and hate them, my changeling, here where every man's hand must be against you.

PETER. I can face them all, for you belong to me, not them. Kiss me.

HELEN *(Kisses him, then gently repulses him.)* I'm strong now, don't make me weak again! *(Sinks on settee.)* Each night I've said, "He must go back!" But each morning, when we'd ride away together, I'd think, "Let me have only one more day!"

PETER. No, we're going to tell them—*(Sits by her.)* —you agreed, Helen!

HELEN. My darling, I've known that you must go. Except when to be with you made me a coward again, when I let you convince me, only because I wanted to be convinced. But *after this*—

PETER. Don't, Helen! I was a fool, a weakling, it won't happen again. I couldn't face my own life without you.

HELEN. What life is this for you? Be brave, Peter, and listen! My life, my London, are nightmare to you. No sad thoughts now, my Peter. We two alone have been chosen for this wonder out of all the millions of lovers since time began. Our Love is against nature, you said, and so it can't be real, but it *is* real, more real, Peter, than if you had been born in my world, or I in yours, because it is—a miracle. Think of what has been given us, not of what is taken away!

PETER. Nothing *can* be taken away; that we have come together at all, doesn't that prove that we weren't meant to lose each other?

HELEN. Yes, yes, and we shall be together always, Peter—not in my time, nor in yours, but in God's.

PETER. Yes, but, Helen, I want you *now*—this is our one life on earth!

HELEN. *Our* life on earth?

PETER. You *can't* want me to go back! You love me!

HELEN. With all my soul.

PETER. Then I stay here!

HELEN *(Up)*. Stay, then, Peter! "For life—for life" a life of nightmare that never ends! So that I may watch you in torment, when I cannot help you! So that you may live on in my world, in a living death, *mad! (Kneels beside him.)* Because you love me, you condemn me to *that?*

[PETER *buries his face in his hands.*]

You *do* see *it!* Leave me, while our love is still beautiful! I ask it for *my* sake.

[*She rises. Pause.* PETER *rises, turns slowly, takes a few mechanical steps towards the panel where the picture hangs in 1928. He stops, then goes up to console table, extends his hands to the panel, in gesture of surrender.*]

PETER *(Turns, leaning against console table.)* But now *he* will be here, in my place, with this body! How can *you* bear *that*?

HELEN. Love will give me strength. *(Turns away, head in hands; as he walks slowly down stage she speaks half over her shoulder.)* You've your life to live out in the Future, Peter. Don't be too sad there about a girl who's been dead so long. *(Turns to face him.)* As I grow old, your youth will seem to me eternal

youth, for you *will* come, won't you, young as I see you now, to my grave in St. Mark's churchyard. To you, that will be to-morrow. And yet, 'twill be generations after I am dead. I'll ask for a stone with the letters cut deep, so they won't wear away, before you come to me. And you must come—alone.

PETER. Alone?

HELEN *(Turns away.)* But if you love that girl, you must marry her.

PETER. Don't, don't!

HELEN *(Turns to him.)* You *can't* live in this house, with only that old woman to look after you. When that happens I shall be . . . And yet, I *am* jealous, even though I *will* be dead.

PETER. I love you only, now, and in my own time, and in whatever other times may come.

[*She moves towards him, stops.*]

HELEN. I believe. Forgive me.

[*The afternoon light has been gradually dimming. Clock on landing strikes once. They both start; he steps back, stops as* HELEN *speaks.*]

If only you could take back with you just one thing that was mine! *(Turns, opens drawer in small table, takes out crux ansata.)* Father got this in Egypt, while the fleet was there. In some strange way it has meant so much to me.

[PETER *looks up slowly.*]

PETER *(Overwhelmed)*. The crux ansata!

HELEN. What is it?

PETER. The symbol of life, and of eternity!

HELEN. Then that's why I loved it so.

PETER. Helen! This was mine . . . long ago!

HELEN. Yours—long ago?

PETER. It was standing over there, when I first entered this room,—in the Future.

[*It has now grown dusk.*]

HELEN. This little thing—has crossed the great darkness between us. Mine while I live, yours in that world that I shall never see.

[PETER *steps towards her; she holds out the Cross as though to ward him off, and takes step backwards.*]

This was our parting!

[PETER *walks backwards towards door* R., *slowly and mechanically. The door opens,* LADY ANNE *enters, stops and exclaims violently on seeing* PETER; *she is terrified, and for the first time.*]

LADY ANNE. Eh—what—*you here!* I saw you as I came up, drinking with Tom in the study! How, then, are you here before me?

PETER *(Slowly as in a trance—still looking at* HELEN*)*. I passed you on the stairs as you turned your head.

LADY ANNE *(Accepting it)*. I vow you run like a cat.

[PETER *backs out* R., *as* LADY ANNE *crosses to settee and picks up candlesticks.* PETER *closes door as she puts them on the table.*

[LADY ANNE *sits on settee.* HELEN *still motionless.*]

Why have you brought out that ugly old Egyptian thing?

[HELEN *walks slowly to console table, puts Cross down, stands back to audience.* MAID *enters* L. *carrying lighted taper, lights candles in sconces flanking double door.* HELEN *turns, looking fixedly at* MAID.]

HELEN. No more dear shadows!

[LADY ANNE *waves dismissal.*]

[*Exit* MAID, L.]

LADY ANNE. Frenzy from them, moonshine from you! He seemed quiet; are his wits then restored?

[*Pause.* HELEN *stands before console table looking fixedly before her.*]

Are you not well, child?

[*Pause.* TOM *enters* R., *looks from one to the other importantly. Stops near door.*]

TOM. Gad's life, what an afternoon! Two lunatics in one house are too many for any man's stomach. God knows what devilment Kate will concoct when she's up to it again, but I've one piece of good news for you. He's just been telling me in the study, poor devil. He's been ill, ever since he came here. *(Tapping forehead).* Can't remember a thing that's happened. Didn't even remember me. Gaped at me and said, "Mr. Pettigrew, I presume?"

LADY ANNE *(Rises, comes to* TOM C.*)* Oh, then, his wits must be quite, quite gone!

TOM. But no, ma'am; they've come back! He's cured! That frenzy in here was but the end of a fever. 'Twas only the fever made his brain work oddly, so that everyone feared him—he's like one of us now. *(Pauses, turns and looks out, puzzled.)* That's it— *one of us!*

LADY ANNE *(Relieved)*. Ah! And now may God's mercy remember Kate as well! *(Walks* L.*)* I said all along 'twas superstitious gabble. *(As she goes out* L.*)* A fever, poor dear man!

TOM. I never could make the fellow swallow above half a bottle. And now he's laid me five guineas he'll drink me under the table! *(Looks out door* R.*)* Here he comes upstairs!

HELEN. Leave *me* alone with him!

TOM. *You!* 'Tis *Kate* he wants to see!

[*Exit* R., *closing door, calling in boisterous chaff.*]

You Yankee mystery-monger!

HELEN *(Repeats mechanically.)* One of us—now!

[*The door-knob* R. *turns. The door opens, slowly.* HELEN *turns to door, curtseys as the* CURTAIN *falls.*]

SCENE TWO

[*The curtain rises in 1928 at the relative moment when it fell on the preceding scene in 1784. Scene set as in Act I, Scene 2. Portrait hangs as before. Curtain closed, one candle burning on desk, two on small table between couch and armchair. No other lights,*

excepting from the fire. Light switch hangs from wall near door R. *by torn wires. Crux ansata on writing-table.*]

[MARJORIE *and* AMBASSADOR *are shown in* R. *by* MRS. BARWICK, *who is talking volubly as she enters.*]

MRS. BARWICK. . . . but it wasn't anything definite he said, miss; it was the tone of his voice and the way he looked at me when he was going out, sir, as though he was seeing the last of me. That was why I took the liberty of telephoning the Embassy, Your Excellency.

AMBASSADOR *(Interrupting)*. Quite right, too, Mrs. Barwick, even if it turns out a false alarm. You've had the patience of Job, and nobody will appreciate it so much as Mr. Standish when he's well again. But why are you using candles all over the house? Can't we talk this over better if we have some real light?

MRS. BARWICK. It's no good, Your Excellency, the lights aren't working.

MARJORIE *(Impatiently)*. Oh dear, what does that matter?

MRS. BARWICK. He did it himself, sir; he tore out this fitting last night—*(Handles dangling switch.)* then he smashed the main switchboard downstairs.

AMBASSADOR. But when this thing first came on him he was fascinated by the light. Kept turning it on and off.

MARJORIE. Oh, Mr. Ambassador, we didn't come here to talk about electric light! We've got to find him right away, before anything can happen to him.

AMBASSADOR. There, there, my dear, I'm sure he's all right, wherever he is. *(Sits in armchair.)*

MARJORIE. Now pull yourself together, Mrs. Barwick, and try and be clear and definite. How long has he been gone?

MRS. BARWICK. I heard the clock strike the quarter, miss, as he went downstairs and out the front door.

MARJORIE *(Sits on settee.)* This is terrible; it was wicked to leave him alone here when he was so ill; we ought to have sent him where he can be taken care of.

AMBASSADOR. My dear, I've been in touch with Sir William Briggs all along, but Peter has been one too many for us. He won't give himself away to the doctors—

MARJORIE. Won't give himself away! Why, those drunken scrapes, when he shouts old curses and drinking songs, his gambling and scattering I. O. U.'s all over London, telling people that he's ten thousand pounds a year but some other man has got hold of all his money—*surely,* any doctor with a grain of sense—

AMBASSADOR. Ah, no, Marjorie, of course we who know Peter—but to convince others there must be more definite symptoms.

MARJORIE. Anyway, we've got to find him now; we must follow him!

AMBASSADOR. But we haven't anything to go on yet. You mustn't be so upset, Marjorie. Of course he'll come back. Where could he go? And he didn't even say he wasn't coming back. Now, Mrs. Barwick, has anything in particular happened since I was here?

MRS. BARWICK. Well, sir . . .

MARJORIE. Go on, do you suppose I don't know?

MRS. BARWICK. *She* was here again, sir, and they quarrelled something dreadful.

[AMBASSADOR *holds up warning hand to* MRS. BARWICK.]

MARJORIE. Oh, I'm not a baby; he doesn't know what he's doing any more than he knows who he is, and now that we've got her name we can buy her off if we have to.

MRS. BARWICK. And those people came again from that night club. He was shouting at them, sir. I—I listened, sir. I thought it my duty, sir, so I could tell you, Your Excellency.

AMBASSADOR. Oh, quite right, Mrs. Barwick.

MRS. BARWICK. He yelled at them, sir. He said they weren't alive, and they wouldn't be born for another hundred years. And when they laughed at him he hit one of them, and then they went away and I found him drunk on the floor, miss. *(Cries.)*

[*Door* R. *opens slowly.* PETER *comes in, carrying a sheet of paper. He wears a lounge suit. He looks pale and dazed and, without seeing the others, lays the paper down on writing-bureau, placing the crux ansata on it.*]

PETER *(Turns.)* Mr. Ambassador!

AMBASSADOR. I just thought I'd look in, Standish. I've taken the liberty of bringing a great friend of mine—

PETER *(Goes towards couch.)* Marjorie!

MARJORIE *(Steps towards him.)* Peter! You know me!

[*Holds up her face for him to kiss.* PETER *kisses her hand.*]

PETER. Of course. *(To* MRS. BARWICK*).* I'm afraid —Peter Standish—has been giving you a lot of trouble.

MRS. BARWICK *(Delighted).* Oh, sir, it's all right now!

[*Exit* R.]

PETER *(To* AMBASSADOR*).* So you think I'm still the other man?

AMBASSADOR *(Looks at portrait, back again to* PETER.*)* I'm blessed if I know what I think.

MARJORIE *(Overjoyed).* It's all right now, Mr. Ambassador!

PETER. Mr. Ambassador, all my thanks for your kindness; if you'll forgive me, I must talk to Marjorie now.

AMBASSADOR *(Disturbed).* Don't you think perhaps—

PETER. You may take it that I'm myself again.

AMBASSADOR. I'll go over in the corner with a book.

MARJORIE. Please go; you understand, you—if you weren't an ambassador I'd call you old darling.

AMBASSADOR *(Reluctantly, to* MARJORIE*).* I'll wait downstairs.

[*Exit* AMBASSADOR R.]

[*A pause.*]

PETER. We were going to be married. It seems so very long ago.

MARJORIE *(Happily).* You remember!

PETER *(His head turns towards portrait.)* The Ambassador came here and found—

MARJORIE. He found my poor Peter ill, but now he's cured.

PETER. I'm incurable.

MARJORIE. You *are* cured. If you remember me, you can't think any longer *(Gesture to portrait).* that you're *—him.*

PETER *(Distressed).* You couldn't marry me after this, could you?

MARJORIE. Never mind that now, Peter, I'm here to take care of you.

PETER. Marjorie! Something has happened, something you could never believe. And now I must live here—alone.

MARJORIE *(After a pause, turns away, her voice shaking.)* In this house, with only your old woman? Why, the place can't even be kept clean.

PETER. I'll shut up most of it.

MARJORIE. Peter, you know you can't afford it.

PETER. No—but I'll keep this room—*(As though to himself).* just as it was, always.

MARJORIE. Even when you're well, you can't look after yourself.

[*She sees his distress and begins again in a different voice.*]

Never mind, Peter. But I can't break an old habit. I shall go on looking after you, even if it's from a long way off.

PETER. I feel such a beast.

MARJORIE *(Sure of herself by now).* It's all right. Tell me about your work. *(Crosses to writing-bureau.)* This used to be over there.

[*She takes up the crux ansata, walks with it towards console table.* PETER *turns, almost snatches it from her, comes down to small table, puts it down, sits in armchair;* MARJORIE *astonished and hurt.*]

Why, Peter, what's the matter? *(Turns, ruffles papers on writing-bureau.)* Is this the draft for your new architecture book? May I look? *(Picks up paper.)* Why, here's an epitaph.

PETER. I copied it just now, from a tombstone in St. Mark's churchyard.

MARJORIE *(Coming to him with the paper).* Whose epitaph is it?

PETER. A girl who died one hundred and forty-one years ago.

MARJORIE. Who was she?

PETER. A cousin of Peter Standish.

MARJORIE *(Looking at paper).* It's Latin. What's it all mean?

[*Extends paper to him;* PETER *takes it mechanically.*]

Peter! You're crying! . . . Who was that girl who's been dead for ages? . . . Peter, speak to me! *(Turns away; turns again to him.)* . . . Don't you know me, Peter? *(Moves toward door* R., *hesitates, turns to him again.)* You want me to go?

[*Exit* MARJORIE R.]

PETER. "Here lies, in the confident hope of the blessed resurrection, and life eternal, Helen Pettigrew, beloved younger daughter of Sir William Pettigrew, K.B., Vice-Admiral of the Blue, and the Lady Anne Pettigrew, who departed this life June the fifteenth, 1787, aged twenty-three years. . . ."

[*His voice breaks down. The paper falls to the floor.* PETER *remains motionless in the same pose for some moments before the* CURTAIN *falls slowly.*]

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